### Freethought Complimentary Copy Join FFRF Now! Today

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## COV-KEEP STATE-CHURCH SEPARATE-FFRF ORG 1

### FFRF sues, protests Gov. Perry's prayer rally

The Freedom From Religion Foundation fought Texas Gov. Rick Perry's unconstitutional sponsorship of a Christian evangelical prayer rally both in court and in person at Perry's Aug. 6 prayer rally at Reliant Stadium in Houston.

FFRF, a state/church watchdog with more than 16,600 members nationwide, filed suit July 13 on behalf of its 700 Texas members. Making the lawsuit possible were local plaintiffs Kay Staley, Scott Weitzenhoffer, Wilfred Lyon, Stacie Gonzalez and Kristin

FFRF's federal lawsuit landed in the courtroom of Judge Gray Miller, a recent conservative Bush appointee. On July 28, Miller dismissed the lawsuit and request for a restraining order, ruling that the plaintiffs lacked standing.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, who attended the hearing in Houston, commented: "Nobody would have trouble seeing the injury if a governor aligned himself with a radical Muslim group and used his office to call all citizens to a daylong prayer to Allah rally. This event is no different."

Perry's actions as governor gave official recognition to a devotional event, endorsed religion, had no secular rationale and encouraged citizens to pray and non-Christians to convert to Christianity.

Foiled in court, FFRF responded by protesting at the event. Every billboard company in the area refused to lease a billboard to FFRF for a message critical of Perry's involvement. So FFRF negotiated for a mobile billboard to circulate

at the stadium all day with the message, "Beware Prayer by Pious Politicians — Get Off Your Knees and Get to Work!" It also commissioned an aerial banner (see photo at top), saying: "GOV - KEEP STATE/ CHURCH SEPARATE. FFRF. ORG."

Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Gaylor, along with FFRF legal intern Taylor Myers, flew from Madison, Wis., to join other FFRF'ers and protesters at the event, picketing all day in 107-degree heat index.

The rally's website called Perry the "initiator" of the prayer and fasting event. The governor's staff admitted in an affidavit that much of Perry's support for the event was in his official capacity as governor. The suit alleged Perry's actions sent an impermissible "message that believers in reli-



FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor flew to Houston from Wisconsin to give Texas Gov. Rick Perry hell on Aug. 6 for mixing state and church. Rodney Hinds (right), Texas FFRF member and co-founder of Freethought Oasis, drove from his home in Amarillo to take a stand for secular government. Turn to Page 12 for more photos of the protest.

gion are political insiders, and nonbelievers are political outsiders."

FFRF asked for an order to restrain Perry from continuing to serve as the face of "The Response: A Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis." Both an official letter of invitation signed "Rick Perry, Governor of Texas," and an official vid-

eotape featuring Perry as governor greeted visitors to The Response website, in which he invited the nation to join him on Aug. 6 to turn to Jesus and ask for God's forgiveness. His invitation invited "fellow Americans" to join him and other "praying people," in "asking God's forgiveness, wis-

Continued on back page

### In Columbus, the tax man cometh

### Inside This Issue



High school essavs Page 8

Lake Hypatia 4th Page 13





Sharing the crank mail Page 17

An Ohio pastor's insistence in Columbus has backfired. fice's summary of the property that an FFRF billboard be Shortly after Columbus athethat lists \$0 in annual taxes on moved off church property ist Dylan Galos' "Coming Out the property and its classificaof the Closet" billboard stating tion as 'exempt,' " FFRF Co-"I can be good without God" went up in late June, Rev. Waymon Malone Jr. of Christ Cathedral Church said it had to go, and it was moved to a new

After researching property and tax records, FFRF sent a letter July 7 to ask Franklin County Auditor Clarence Mingo to look into the situation. Had Christ Cathedral ever paid taxes on the commercial portion of the property as required by law? Did the church misrepresent the intended use of the property when applying for a tax exemption in 1997?

Christ Cathedral is located at 3350 Allegheny Ave. The billboard was located behind the church, facing Stelzer Road.

"We have enclosed your of-

President Annie Laurie Gaylor noted in the letter.

"Additionally, we have provided a copy of Christ Cathe-Church's application for exemption that was completed by Mr. Malone in 1997. When asked how the property was being used, Mr. Malone said, 'for a church.' On the form, Mr. Malone also stated that the property was not being leased or rented to anyone else, was not used to produce any income other than donations, and that no one else was using the property other than the applicant."

Mingo responded July 20 that his staff would look into it. A few days later, FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott got a

Continued on page 3



Dylan Galos gives a thumbs up before a church complaint moved his billboard. a business then complained, so Dylan's billboard was moved twice in Columbus.

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### Meet a Legal Intern

Name: Arash Sajed Khosrowshahi. I go by "Ash" since it's easier for people to pronounce.

Where and when I was born: San Jose, Calif., Feb. 10, 1987. In a manger, with three wise men present. Fragrant punch was served. Just kidding.

Family: The only other person in my immediate family who's an atheist is my younger brother Kia, who just turned 18. He's also the only one in my family who'd want to be mentioned in a heathen newspaper such as this one.

**Education**: I graduated in 2005 from Center High School in Antelope, Calif. I graduated with dual degrees in philosophy and mathematics from the University of California-Davis in 2009. I'll be a second-year law student at Boalt Hall at UC-Berkeley.

My religious upbringing was: My mom came from a big Irish Catholic family in the Midwest. My dad came from Shiite Iran and was raised with that religious tradition. They taught me general things about God and Jesus and Muhammad, and I got a good dose of being exposed to churches, the bible, mosques and the Quran.

They wanted to expose me to these different views so that I would later choose for myself what religion I wanted to practice. I have a feeling though that they each secretly hoped I would pick their faith. They're pretty uncomfortable with me being an atheist. My mom thinks I'm still going through a phase.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I was active at UC-Davis in the Agnostic and Atheist Student Association and was familiar with Dan Barker's debates and the general work FFRF does. After being in law school a couple of months, I figured it would be worth a shot to approach the religion problem in our society from the legal perspective, since I was mainly exposed to it from the theological and technically minded philosophical perspec-

While arguing about whether Alvin Plantinga's modal argument for the existence of God works was intellectually engaging for me, I knew I wouldn't be making as much of an impact on society doing that as I have been here by being a watchdog for the Establishment Clause.

What I do here: My day-to-day tasks usually involve drafting and sending out "cease and desist" letters to various organizations, schools, police departments and so on which violate the prayers at graduation ceremonies. I Also, because of the Scopes monkey

also like to call myself "The Memo Guy," as I've been doing a lot of research on what federal and state courts have said about chaplain programs, religious radio broadcasts on public airwaves, church tax exemptions, roadside crosses and regulations that schools have to follow if they charge religious groups rent to use school facilities.

What I like best about it: Everyone here is incredibly friendly and open to suggestions on how we can improve each other's work. I also like being able to think about critical legal issues and to see what rationales (or sometimes "irrationales") judges have used for why we have the laws on religion that

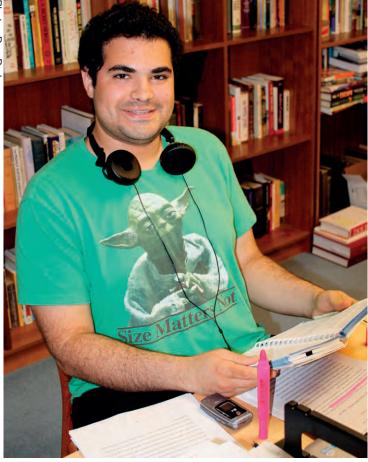
Establishment and Free Exercise Clause jurisprudence is very murky and all over the place, which is both good and bad. It's good because it lets you test different ways you think cases can and should go, and makes the state of the law richer as a result. But it's bad because oftentimes a judge can basically rule how he or she wants the case to go and find the appropriate legal theory to get there.

Something funny that's happened at work: One day, Annie Laurie was showing us the different lighting options we could use in the library where we work, and after a serious and fruitful democratic exchange between myself and the other interns over the course of five intense minutes, we chose a semi-ominous, soft-toned "fluorescent lights off, incandescent bulbs on" option. Then one of the staff attorneys came in and said, "This is going to put me to sleep," and in a fit of authoritarian, Qaddafi-like rage, turned back on all of the lights!

My legal interests are: Despite my interests in the Constitution, civil rights and societal problems, I'm planning to focus on some area of business law, probably centered around banking, taxes or securities. After the recession, I became really interested in learning how Wall Street works. (Short answer: It doesn't, at least for most of us.)

With my math background, I hope to go into the belly of the beast and make the process we have now become more equitable rather than corporatist. But knowing how this story plays out, it's likely I'll become Darth Gordon Gekko Vader.

My legal heroes are: I'm a big fan of the late Justice William Brennan and think the Supreme Court would do well if we started appointing more jus-Constitution, such as when there are tices with liberal mindsets like he had.



trial and because he was a general badass attorney, Clarence Darrow. In terms of what I think a lawyer should strive to be, I always think of Gregory Peck's portrayal of Atticus Finch in "To Kill a

Mockingbird." These three words sum me Sarcastic, intense,

erative. Things like: I like progressive metal music, and I'm getting into post-rock. I like reading, though I don't have much time for it like I used to. I also watch a lot of political philosophy and current events videos on You-Tube. when I'm not trolling my friends on Facebook or creating Internet memes.

I'm a big fan of cynical comedians.

My favorites are George Carlin, Doug Stanhope and Louis CK. The greatest movie of all time is "The Big Lebowski."

Things I smite: Idiots.

### FFRF welcomes 23 new Lifetime Members

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to announce 22 new Lifetime Members and one After-Life Member. They are:

Wendy Britton, Stephen Brown, James Grant, William Harrison, Jenea Hayes, Robin Hayes, Bruce R. Henry, David Hruska, Mike Jenkins, Evelyn Johnstone, Kathryn Kirtley, Lee Leimberg, Victor Makau, Kimberly Moseley, Daniel Poeder, Steven Rand, Brenda Richardson, Arthur Rudeseal, Joyce Rutter, John Tindale and Margaret G. Tomm. One new "Lifer" preferred not to be publicly acknowledged.

Steven Rand, who was already a Lifetime Member, donated an additional \$2,000 to place in the Lifetime Membership endowment: "Now my hope is that I will get to live three lifetimes. And support you through the entire time to ensure greater longevity."

FFRF also received an After-Life Membership at the \$5,000 level from a supporter who prefers to remain anon-

States represented are: Arizona, Ar-

kansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington.

Lifetime Members are \$1,000 designated for membership or renewal per individual and After-Life Memberships (for those who want their contributions to live after them) are \$5,000 per individual designated as membership or renewal. Lifetime and After-Life Memberships go into a safe, rainy-day endowment to safeguard FFRF's future, with interest going into program and membership services. All dues and donations to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes to the fullest extent of the law.

FFRF's warmest thanks to its newest After-Lifer and to Anonymous, Margaret, John, Joyce, Arthur, Brenda, Steven, Daniel, Kimberly, Victor, Lee, Kathryn, Evelyn, Mike, David, Bruce, Robin, Jenea, William, James, Stephen and Wendy!

#### A Note to **Subscribers**

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and "Private Line." If your label shows August or earlier, your subscription has expired. Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100 sustaining; \$25-student) saves us time and postage, and is tax-deductible. (Subscription-only is \$20/ year.) Freethought Today is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in Jan/Feb and August. Send to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.

#### **Send Us Your Address Change Promptly!**

Don't miss a single issue! If you move, notify us directly and promptly. The Post Office does not forward third-class mail. FFRF cannot be responsible for replacing back issues if we have not been notified prior to your move. Back issues, while they last, may be ordered for \$2 each.

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August 2011

The only freethought newspaper in the United States

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### Meet a Legal Intern

Name: Taylor Myers.

Where and when I was born: Englewood, N.J., June 5, 1990. I've lived in the New York City metropolitan area my whole life.

Family: My dad is Don Myers, an FFRF member who's a machinist. My mother is Eileen Gardner, a professor of biology at William Paterson University. Thaddeus and Kendra are my siblings, both older than me, living in New Orleans.

Education: I'm entering my senior year at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, where I'm a philosophy and music double major. I started a music major for vocal performance (specifically, opera) but switched to music theory. I co-founded the Mount Holyoke Freethinkers, Atheists and Questioners (aka the FAQ) so that irreligious people could have a safe place.

I'm still unsure if graduate study is right for me at this point, but law school or grad school for music theory are still on the table. If anyone has any advice for a college grad who wants to join the great world of activism, feel free to dispense that advice.

My religious upbringing was: Not religious. My father always has a few choice words to throw at religion. I found a picture book from our childhood that explains to children why there is no God and how the concept of religion is stupid, which I thought was neat. When I was about 9, I was in an art museum with my mom when I asked her, "Who's the guy in all the paintings?" Well, it was Jesus, and I just honestly didn't know what he was supposed to look like.

Since then, I've made an effort to learn all I can about world religions, specifically Christianity, and I'm proud to say that the 9-year-old who didn't know who Jesus was now knows a little bit more about the bible than some of her religious friends. The last religious member of my family is my grandma, who insists on asking every time I see her "when I'm getting baptized." I consider myself an atheist, but (as with most things) tend to keep an open mind and stay flexible.

How I came to work as an FFRF **legal intern**: I know I want to pursue state-church activism and wanted to see what that would be like from a legal sense. I've grown up reading periodi-



**Taylor Myers** 

cals my dad gets from activist organizations similar to FFRF, but Freethought Today has always been my favorite.

What I do here: I research complaints, draft letters, organize the legal department's filing system, crack really bad jokes and keep tabs on Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

What I like best about it: Everything! Knowing that I'm making a difference and directly doing something about problems I've been complaining about for years is important. The office environment is pretty familial. I also like the library, where the interns "live." My first day, I don't think I did much work because I was just staring at all the books, thinking "I have to read that book" about every single one.

Something funny that's happened at work: We get a lot of really weird assignments, which are always fun and spark strange debates in the library. Also, a lot of our work concerns issues in small towns, and navigating the local websites can be *such* a pain. We like

to see who can find the worst one, the funniest one, etc.

There was one town that had a link in the middle of its home page to its seven (or so) different graveyards. For a place with such a tiny population, and a high school graduating class of nine this year, it was pretty impressive/scary. Sharing weird findings like that make the library a really awesome place to work.

My legal interests are: The First Amendment, constitutional law and separation of state and church.

These three words sum me up: Talkative, thinking, curious.

Things I like: Feminism, atheism, "The X-Files," New Jersey, romantic comedies, David Hume, dogs, the problem of evil, music theory, opera, small-town websites that have the mayor's fax number and address listed under his/her picture, pop music, the Green Party, animal rescue shelters, human rights, Plato, the Seven Sisters colleges (Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar and Wellesley).

Things I smite: Naysayers, closed minds, circular arguments, misogynists and elected officials who think it's really cool to endorse a religion with their

### Billboard denial costs Ohio church

Continued from front page

staff. "He said that the billboard prop- at a yearly rate of \$186."

erty will be taxed. It is approximately phone call from a member of Mingo's one-tenth of an acre that will be taxed



Says Nick about the reaction (above) to his billboard: "Reason is still above faith."

#### **Include FFRF** In Your Estate **Planning**

Arrange a bequest in your will or trust, or make the Freedom From Religion Foundation the beneficiary of an insurance policy, bank account, or IRA. It's easy to do.

> For related information (or to request a bequest brochure), please phone Annie Laurie Gaylor at (608) 256-8900. **FFRF**

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Freedom Depends on Freethinkers



Freedom From Religion Foundation

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#### What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists.

The Foundation's e-mail address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all e-mail correspondence.

Foundation members wishing to receive online news releases, "action alerts" and "Freethought of the Day" should contact info@ffrf.org.



Declare and share your nonbelief in FFRF's online "Out of the Closet" campaign! ffrf.org/out

#### **Further investigation**

FFRF further inquired in an Aug. 1 letter to Mingo about the churchowned property at 407 Stelzer Road that's directly behind the billboard. It was purchased for \$550,000 and is receiving a tax exemption. Several private businesses lease most of the building.

Gaylor wrote, "We request that you investigate the church's use of these properties, as we believe that large portions do not fall within the religious tax exemption statute under Ohio [law]."

Gaylor also noted that Teach & Learn Child Care, AMC Realty and AMC Transport, all with listed addresses at 407 Stelzer Road, are headed by Anthony Malone, who FFRF believes may be related to Pastor Malone.

In an Aug. 5 Columbus Dispatch story, Auditor's Office spokesman Dave O'Neil confirmed that the tenth of an acre would go on the tax rolls. He also said that Christ Cathedral owed \$1,645 in 2010 taxes for the commercial portion of 407 Stelzer Road. The bill, with interest and fines, is now \$1,900. Malone said he forgot to pay the taxes.

Malone told the Dispatch he doesn't know why FFRF is going after his church. He claimed he donates all billboard income to the church and didn't think he had to pay land taxes. [Interestingly, all 11 reader comments on the online news story took the church to task for not paying taxes.]

Due to Ohio statute, back taxes on the billboard land can't be collected. FFRF thanks Staff Attorney Patrick Elliot and intern Ash Khosrowshahi for their work on this complaint.

### Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

#### **Gifts**

For all the limping men in the world, for women waiting by telephones, little boys lost at county fairs, farmers on rainy April days, cooks in the all-night diners for schoolteachers on Labor Day, dancers with arthritic knees, cops on the tough night beats for brown boys in tomato fields, seamen on watch in winter storms, widows in abiding black for all of you, I offer slender weeds in sunshine, pears on drooping branches, seaweed waving in clear water — hold on to white clouds over corn fields, breeze in the shade of maples, shouts in distant playgrounds hold on to the shapes of triangles, the lingering touch of fingers, memories of friendship — hold on to words like Welcome, and Future, Intelligence, and Living. Hold on: you are holding my life, my love.

> © 2011 Philip Appleman Freethought Today is pleased to publish this new poem.



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible (2011), Darwin's Ark (new 2009 edition) and Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, and the Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population. His poetry and fiction have won many

awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in Harper's Magazine, The Nation, The New Republic, The New York Times, The Paris Review, Partisan Review, Poetry, and The Yale Review.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both Lifetime Members (four times over) of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of "Noah," Philip's comic masterpiece, for the Foundation's newest musical CD, "Beware of Dogma," featuring Dan Barker. That CD also includes Phil's poem "Fleas," set to the music of "Trees." New and Selected Poems is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd, The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, is \$22 ppd., Kharma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie, \$27 ppd., Darwin's Ark, \$23 ppd., and Perfidious Poverbs, \$20 ppd. (ffrf.org/shop/).

#### Recruit a Member

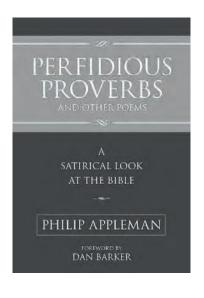
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Send \$2 with the name and address of each person you wish to receive a sample copy of Freethought Today to:

FFRF, P.O. Box 750, Madison WI 53701

#### Freedom depends upon freethinkers

(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)



#### By Dan Barker

Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible, by Philip Appleman (130 pp., paperback, Humanity Books, 2011)

oss the Gideon bibles out of hotel rooms and replace them with this book.

Imagine if Mary, the mother of Jesus, could speak for herself. Unless we find a trove of ancient affidavits, the only way we can do that today is through fiction. It's all fiction anyway. The biblical authors were, after all, authors. If their compositions count as truth, then so do Phil Appleman's, but his are infinitely more fun to read.

And when they are not intended to be fun, they are powerful. (I actually read "Gertrude" out loud during a public debate. It is that powerful.) Like the biblical authors, Phil has a point of view, but he is admitting it openly by deliberately yanking our perspective to the side — a point of view with a point of view.

"Mary" is one of the most incredible poems I have ever read. "Not exactly what you'd want for your son, is it?" Between the lines, behind the lines and the lines themselves all shift the camera angle from the sham orthodox cry for miracles to focus on the human story behind the scenes.

I long ago lost the gift of prophecy, but I will make a secular prediction here: Many of the lines in this book are destined for the quote books. You will find your own, but here are some of my favorites (and I hope I am not giving away too many punch lines):

- "Maybe we're all exactly like gods. And maybe that's our really original sin."
- "This is the only real revelation that God is only a trick with mirrors, our dark reflection in a glass."

# Poet gives bible his original spin

- "God must have a weird sense of values, and if there's a Judgment Day, as some folks think, He's going to have a lot to answer for."
- "JUDAS: Well, with or without those thirty pieces of silver, it's a wonder that none of the others crossed him first."
- "Why can't pious people just be moral?"
- "HEAVEN: The big apartheid in the sky."

I can't end without singing highest praise for my favorite, "Gathering at the River." I have no trouble at all seeing that this is great poetry. It is so good that it should not be set to music, just as it would be a huge mistake to put lyrics to Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." I read this one twice in a row, and keep going back to it, like a song you want to hear again and again:

"... Imagine, not eons of boredom or pain, but honest earth-to-earth; and when our bodies rise again, they will be wildflowers, then rabbits.

then wolves, singing a perfect love to the beautiful, meaningless moon."

I agree with Phil that there is no meaning of life, and that is what makes it so precious. Life is its own reward: a song that doesn't need words. But the fact that there is no meaning of life does not mean there is no meaning in life.

As long as there is such beauty to create and admire — as long as we have Phil Appleman's wonderful words — there is immense meaning in life.

Perfidious Proverbs is available for \$20 ppd. online at ffrf/shop.org/ or by mail to FFRF, Sales, Box 750, Madison, WI 53701

Dan Barker, author of **Godless**, is copresident of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

#### YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

#### TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

produced by the Freedom From Religion Foundation



Hosted by Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor

Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.

iTunes or podcasts archived at: ffrf.org/news/radio

Slightly irreverent views, news, music & interviews

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#### ANOTHER ANTI-CHRISTIAN RADICAL ISLAMIST ARAB WHO IS UNDERMINING THE PILLARS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION





### **Overheard**

So where does morality come from, if not from God? Two places: evolution and secular reasoning. Despite the notion that beasts behave bestially, scientists studying our



primate relatives, such as chimpanzees, see evolutionary rudiments of morality: behaviors that look for all the world like altruism, sympathy, moral disapproval, sharing - even notions of fairness. This is exactly what we'd expect if human morality, like many other behaviors, is built partly on the genes of our ancestors.

Jerry Coyne, University of Chicago ecology and evolution professor, "As atheists know, you can be good without God"

USA Today, 7-31-11

If public officials are keen on erecting monuments to important values, they would do well to check out *mybillofrights*. org. This organization is committed to installation of Bill of Rights displays in public spaces across the country. Saluting the Bill of Rights doesn't violate the separation of church and state; in fact, it celebrates it.

Ken Paulson, First Amendment Center president, "Localities, save on legal bills: Don't post the Ten Command-

First Amendment Center, 7-19-11

Everyone needs a helping hand sometimes, and we're glad to be able to offer it and make a difference. Our principal message this year is that atheists and nontheists can be "Good without God," with events oriented toward public service, volunteering and charitable

Cory Derringer, University of Northern Iowa Freethinkers and Inquirers president, on UNIFI's participation in storm clean-up in Vinton

Vinton Today, 7-23-11

I think it's a testament to the power of belief and the difference between belief and science. She is asking that the physical laws of the universe be changed to accommodate her views.

Donald Waller, University of Wisconsin-Madison botany professor, dismayed by creationist Mary Weigand's Dane County Fair booth claiming the universe is only 6,000 years old

Wisconsin State Journal, 7-19-11 [Editor's note: Weigand's husband is on the School Board in West Bend, Wis.]

Clearly the exotic ideas and news and reports on your show and elsewhere about how exotic and unorthodox some of these religious views are, has

caused heartburn inside the Perry camp, and has really threatened to distract from what they wanted to do, which is say, "Look we're just having a prayer rally, people are going to show up, they're going to pray, they're going to sing." And then when you have the guy who has sex with the sun goddess as part of the story, it's not helpful.

Dallas Morning News reporter Wayne Slater, on removal of a link on Gov. Rick Perry's Day of Prayer website to controversial endorsers

"The Rachel Maddow Show," 7-21-11

The reason Governor Perry is apparently pushing prayer and fasting as a solution for what's wrong with Texas is because he hasn't been able to fix Texas the ordinary way, through governing effectively. His state is falling apart. When you abandon actual governing, you'd better hope Jesus is coming soon to solve your problems.

#### Professor Susan Brooks Thislethwaite, **Chicago Theological Seminary**

The Washington Post, 7-13-11

From 2000, when he became governor, through 2009, he earned \$2.68 million. And his total faith giving? \$14,243 — about half of 1 percent. Kind of a widow's mite.

Columnist Steve Blow, on tax records showing Gov. Rick Perry's charitable donations

Dallas Morning News, 6-26-11

In recent years, scientists specializing in the mind have begun to unravel religion's "DNA." They have produced robust theories, backed by empirical evidence (including "imaging" studies of the brain at work), that support the conclusion that it was humans who created God, not the other way around. And the better we understand the science, the closer we can come to "no heaven . . . no hell . . . and no religion

#### Op-ed by psychiatrist J. Anderson Thomson and medical writer Clare Au-

Los Angeles Times, 7-18-11

The tendency of some religious conservatives to see themselves as a political minority under siege has even been given its own cheeky moniker, Christian Persecution Complex.

**Reporter Michelle Cottle** The Daily Beast, 7-16-11

I'm an atheist, personally. But I don't get angry at other people for believing in God. I respect them. But sometimes I rub *them* the wrong way.

Jacob Maxfield, 12, participant in Camp Quest Chesapeake in Virginia The Washington Post, 7-26-11

### FFRF awards \$5,200 in Bushong high school essay scholarships

The Freedom Religion From Foundation pleased to nounce the ners of its 2011 Herbert Bushong High School Senior Essay Competition. Herbert,



**Herbert Bushong** 

a Lifetime Member from Texas, has again generously endowed the scholarships. FFRF award \$5,200 in prizes.

College-bound seniors were asked to "describe a moment that made you proud to be a freethinker (atheist/agnostic/nonbeliever)."

For first place, Anna Liu received a \$2,000 cash scholarship; \$1,000 goes to Jesse Miller for second place; \$500 to Max Sandler for third place; and \$300

goes to Elizabeth Sweeny for a newly offered fourth place.

Seven \$200 "honorable mentions" go to Benjamin Sudbrink, Kayla Fischl, Sierra Buehlman Barbeau, Samuel Luke, Megan Wickens and Emily Schick.

The essays are printed in this issue on Page 8-11. For space reasons, "honorable mentions" were excerpted.

"We are extremely grateful that Herbert has once again shown such generosity in sponsoring the competition," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "The encouragement he offers young freethinkers is immeasurable. We also congratulate scholarship recipients and all those freethinking students who entered. You're all win-

### State website promotes Christian anti-abortion group

The state of Wisconsin shouldn't be directing citizens to a religious, antiabortion website while providing no links to information about legitimate, legal abortion providers, says a complaint from the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

In a July 14 letter to Gov. Scott Walker, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor called the link to Care Net inappropriate.

Care Net's vision statement says: "Our vision is a culture where lives are transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and every woman chooses life for herself and her unborn child."

Clicking on "Health & Safety" at wisconsin.gov, the online portal to Wisconsin government, leads to (under "Family and Consumer Services") "Family Services Links - NEW!" Clicking that brings up "Care Net Pregnancv Centers" under the "Family" subheading.

Care Net claims affiliation with more than 1,100 "pregnancy centers" to offer women "practical help and emotional support."

"By advertising this organization on a state of Wisconsin website, you are advertising evangelical ideals as well as an anti-abortion stance," Gaylor said. "Such religious propaganda has no place on a government website under 'Health & Safety.'

"Upon further research, it is apparent that there is no information on abortion, which is a constitutional right protected under Roe v. Wade, as a legitimate option for a pregnant woman, through the Family Services Links."

Gaylor added, "Care Net promotes a rabid evangelical Christian agenda, and is hostile to nonbelievers, non-Christians and nonevangelicals, as well as the feminist principle of a woman's right to reproductive self-determina-

Care Net proclaims that it has adapted a statement of faith from the National Association of Evangelicals. The NAE's professed government-relations goal is "Bringing biblical values to the political sphere."

No state government office should ave any affiliation with a group that has a "statement of faith," Gaylor said, because Establishment Clause jurisprudence bars the government from promoting or endorsing religion. FFRF notes that while the state website includes a so-called "Disclaimer for external links," the link to Care Net certainly constitutes an endorsement.

FFRF's complaint was widely covered by the news media.

#### What Is a Freethinker?



free-think-er n. A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

Page 6 Freethought Today Madison, Wisconsin August 2011

### FFRF complaints

### Voter says pee-ew to church precinct

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter of complaint July 14 on behalf of a Wisconsin member Kurt Bocksenbaum to Village President Carl Krueger in Brown Deer, Wis., about a polling place violation at a July 12 state Senate recall primary election.

The letter objected to religious symbolism [see photo] at the polling place at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, including a Jesus portrait and a Latin cross, mixed in with depictions of U.S. history.

"All of these symbols and messages were visible, and unavoidable, to every voter entering the polling site that day and none of them was covered or removed during voting hours," Elliott wrote, adding that Bocksenbaum made a similar complaint at the April spring election to Village Manager Russell Van Gompelon.

After consulting with legal counsel, Van Gompel removed the display. Reportedly, church officials immediately protested and put the display back up.

On July 12, Bocksenbaum complained again and was confronted by the church president, who said that the cross display would not be taken down while the church was used as a polling place.

Elliott asked the village to choose a different polling place to avoid the potential for "political intimidation" in the minds of some voters, adding that the displays falsely tie patriotism to piety. Elliott also stated that Wisconsin law provides that polling places "shall be public buildings" unless it's impractical or other buildings better serve the needs of the electorate.

FFRF received a response from the village attorney, stating that the Village Board would be meeting with the School Board to discuss an alternative polling place. The attorney said another option would be a community center that has not yet begun construction.

"Even if you deem it necessary to select churches or other religious properties as polling locations for future elections, we can certainly agree that it is inappropriate to allow these sites to display patently religious messages while acting as a designated polling location," Elliott wrote.

### Praying to bring rain, stop economic pain

Texas Gov. Rick Perry's call for a day of prayer and fasting Aug. 6 may have inspired Maine Gov. Paul LePage to do the same. LePage released his proclamation the same day (June 6) with the same message (an Aug. 6 prayer rally), using almost the exact same wording. The proclamation called for Maine citizens to "join together for a solemn day of prayer and fasting on behalf of our troubled nation, quoted scripture and was stamped with the state seal.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor sent a letter July 20 to LePage, insisting that he stop misusing his public office to "inappropriately inveigle and exhort" his constitutients to pray.

Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin decided citizens should all pray on July 17 for

an end to a devastating drought. Fallin's proclamation, though nonsectarian, said "The power of prayer is a wonderful thing, and I would ask every Oklahoman to look to a greater power this weekend and ask for rain."

FFRF sent a letter July 19 to Fallin's office, asking her to refrain from such useless and offensive proclamations in the future.

### Prayer bustin' out all over California

An epidemic of government prayer in San Bernadino, San Diego and Orange counties drew attention from FFRF, which has about 2,460 California members.

FFRF has sent several recent letters of complaint to mayors and council members in Escondido, Highland, Colton and Yorba Linda and to the San Bernadino County Board of Supervisors.

The Yorba Linda City Council, for example, whose prayers are predominantly Christian, usually invites religious leaders to give the invocation. But on May 17, council member Tom Lindsey gave it, ending his prayer, "Father, we ask a blessing upon all of our city staff also, that they can continue to perform well and that they will enjoy their jobs and that we can appreciate them for all they do for us. These things we humbly pray for this evening, asking thy blessings in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

In FFRF's July 11 letter to Yorba Linda Mayor Nancy Rikel, Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote, "To avoid the constitutional concerns these prayers cause for the Council and the divisiveness these prayers cause within the community the solution is simple: discontinue official, government prayers before legislative meetings."

The San Bernadino County Board of Supervisors also routinely prays to a specific deity: Jesus. On June 28, Bishop Dexter Kilpatrick of the Spirit of Truth Worship Ministries concluded his prayer, "We thank you in your sovereign son Jesus' name. Amen." Pablo Cott, Sheriff's Department chaplain, finished his June 16 prayer by saying, "I give you the glory in Jesus' name. Amen." The chaplain of the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, Raymond Gregory, ended the May 24 invocation, "We thank you in the name of our risen lord Jesus. Amen."

On July 11, FFRF sent a complaint to Josie Gonzales, County Board chair. Markert wrote, "The constitutional rights of citizens to participate in government meetings such as the board's weekly meetings should not be predicated upon being subjected to Christian-based or even nondenominational prayer."

On July 7, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor sent Highland Mayor Larry McCallon a letter objecting to Highland's predominantly Christian prayers. The Highland City Council does not make recordings of its meetings available, but according to their official minutes, going back as far as 2008 the vast majority of the prayers were given by Immanuel Baptist Church. Between Jan. 1 and May 25, out of nine council meetings, all but one invocation were delivered by Immanuel



Say 'Cheeesus'

It wasn't Big Brother who was watching voters in Brown Deer, Wis. Maybe Chuck Norris?

Baptist clergy (one was delivered by a member of the Mormon church).

Turning "moments of reflection" at Escondido City Council meetings into overtly Christian prayers is illegal, Markert wrote Mayor Sam Abed on July 25. She noted that, according to FFRF's information, all 12 persons giving the invocation this year are representatives of the Christian faith, and that nine of the 12 have given prayers invoking Jesus, which make the moments of reflection sectarian.

According to a North County Times news story, Dick Bridgman of Emmanuel Faith Community Church has coordinated the prayer program since 2005. "[W]hile Mr. Bridgman is instructed to inform speakers to keep their comments inclusive and nondenominational, the speakers continuously ignore such provisions, and Mr. Bridgman himself has admitted that he does 'not . . . go to every meeting and enforce them,'" the paper reported.

### N.Y. Rep. Rangel puts misguided trust in God

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor sent a letter Aug. 1 to U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., to object to his July 21 House speech, his July 22 email and an "In God We Trust" posting on his official website.

Rangel's email said, in part: "Now is the time when we really need God to guide us to do the right and moral thing. . . . Saying 'In God We Trust' is a constant reminder that we respect our court system and the Supreme Court, but in the final analysis, it's the higher authority of morality that should be guiding all of us."

Gaylor wrote, "Our members have two concerns over this kind of gratuitous religious commentary by elected officials. First, we would wish that elected officials were not only more sensitive to their nonreligious constituents, but were better informed on the constitutional history of the separation between state and church.

Gaylor provided a short history lesson over Congress' belated adoption of the exclusionary religious motto.

### Federal agency stuffs kits with religion

The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, distributes a binder entitled "Children's Program Kit: Supportive Education for Children of Addicted Parents." This informational binder is offered and shipped free of charge to anyone requesting it. Materials are aimed at support group facilitators who work with schoolchildren.

Many would support the concept of federal funding for programs to address substance abuse. But, says FFRF legal intern Kristen Fox, "SAMHSA's binder sometimes slips from counseling to subtle religious endorsement." The binder is littered with references to Alcoholics Anonymous, a spirituality-based treatment program about which FFRF frequently receives complaints for its religious components.

After receiving a citizen complaint, FFRF ordered the kit, which contains some troublesome component, include this statement in the preface: "The Elders have told us that the most important thing we can do for our children is teach them respect and teach them to pray. . . . Growing up in a family hurt by alcoholism or drug addiction blocks respect, the ability to pray, and the hope for a healthy future."

The kit recommends the Serenity Prayer as a closing exercise: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

A high school-level quiz says that "Addiction to alcohol or drugs is a physical disease. Willpower alone will not work. Medical treatment and programs like Alcoholics Anonymous are ways that many people find sobriety after they have tried and failed to do it on willpower alone."

In a July 19 letter to SAMHSA Administrator Pamela Hyde, Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott explained that AA and other spirituality-oriented materials in the binder "is particularly troubling when numerous recovery, treat-

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

ment, and support programs offer [assistance with substance abuse], but without the added religious advocacy. . . . Because the audience in this case consists of schoolchildren, the inclusion of AA materials is even more concerning."

FFRF requested that SAMHSA remove religious materials from the binders to ensure that their content is medical and secular in nature.

### Unfair advantage for godly Georgia plates

Numerous complaints about proposed designs for the new standard Georgia license plate led FFRF to submit a letter of complaint June 28 to the state Department of Revenue, which sponsored a contest for people to submit license plate designs. A committee then narrowed the hundreds of submissions to eight finalists to be voted upon by the public.

Three of the finalists' designs displayed "In God We Trust" at the bottom of the plate, leading most to believe that the inscription would be included on the default plate, should one of the three designs win the contest.

Currently, Georgia's policy allows for two inclusions on standard plates: the county designation or, for \$1, an optional sticker to affix "In God We Trust." No other stickers are available or allowed.

After the public backlash against the policy brought an onslaught of complaints, the department released a statement saying the policy would not change and that "In God We Trust" would only appear with purchase of the optional \$1 sticker. Unsurprisingly, in the first round of voting, all three "In God We Trust" license plates were ranked highest.

Acknowledging that the vague contest policy likely tainted the votes, a second vote was scheduled, omitting from each plate design the optional "In God We Trust" emblem.

### FFRF barks about seal in California

FFRF was contacted by an area resident of Santa Fe Springs, Calif., about the city seal that includes an image of an open bible with a Latin cross. The image represents religion, according to the city website. The seal is prominently displayed on city vehicles.

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott notified Mayor Joseph Serrano that the seal violated the Establishment Clause, as well as the "No Preference Clause" of the California Constitution, which the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals interpreted to mean that government can neither prefer nor appear to act preferentially toward one religion over another.

Noting that both the bible and the cross are staple symbols of Christianity, Elliott wrote, "The federal courts that have examined similar seals have found that such displays violate the Establishment Clause. . . . Any claims of historical significance to the Latin cross and the bible on the Santa Fe Springs City seal do not relieve the city of its constitutional obligations."

### 'Cowboy' pastor ropes in graduation crowd

FFRF filed a complaint June 29 about a fire-and-brimstone commence-

ment speech by a Baptist preacher to the nine graduating seniors and the audience June 4 at Nantahala High School in Nantahala, N.C. The school is part of Macon County Schools.

During the speech, according to an account in The Andrews Journal, Rev. Daniel "Cowboy" Stewart bound a volunteer on stage with ropes while proclaiming, "The devil is out to destroy you, to tie you up. These people who took drugs, overdosed and died didn't mean to. They got tied up."

In a later story, the Waynesville Smoky Mountain News called the overall speech, with repeated biblical references, "a rousing sermon." Stewart himself called it a sermon.

Religion in Macon County Schools is "out of control," according to FFRF's complainant.

In her letter to Superintendent Dan Brigman, FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert noted that the school can't legally schedule prayer as part of its graduation ceremonies, and added that Stewart "obviously abused his speaking opportunity to proselytize a captive audience."

According to the Smoky Mountain News story, Brigman "conceded that describing the [actual graduation] scene might sound strange, but being there, it wasn't anything out of the ordinary."

"The kids get to choose who the speakers are year by year,' said Brigman, and because Stewart was chosen by the students, he didn't see a constitutional conflict inherent in the sermon."

Markert wrote that the district should have realized that Stewart was apt to view the speaking engagement as "a carte blanche invitation to abuse the situation to proselytize," and noted that Brigman's public statements about the sermon expressed no disapproval.

It's no defense that the students invited Stewart, Markert added, because the graduation was ultimately a school-sponsored event.

In a strong editorial June 17 that was headlined "Graduation not a time for sermons," The Andrews Journal said, "We doubt Nantahala will be challenged for this violation of the Constitution. However, public schools and religious leaders cannot continue to flout the rule of law — even if they believe it is unjust."

"Talk about a captive audience!" said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, referring to the pastor's bizarre rope trick. "The focus of public high school graduates ought to be on students, their achievements and futures, in keeping with our secular public education. The district may countenance this off-the-wall sermon disguised as a speech, but our Constitution does not."

### FFRF protests prayer in Newport News, Va.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott sent a letter of complaint July 15 to Mayor McKinley Price and City Council members in Newport News, Va., on behalf of a local complainant opposed to prayer at council meetings.

"We understand that these prayers often invoke Jesus Christ, ending frequently 'in Jesus' name' or some variation," Elliott wrote.

Price said clergy are encouraged to give "generic" prayers, adding that "God is in my life every day. Personally, I see [prayer] as a necessity."



### **Overheard**

We aren't afraid to say the emperor has no clothes. We aren't afraid to point out to people that their pastors and parents can't back up what they preach when it comes to matters of faith. And we aren't afraid to fight back when we see people trying to fuse church and state.

Columnist Hemant Mehta, "Time for atheists to 'come out'"

The Washington Post, 7-20-11

Everything I thought I knew someone else had told me, and they weren't very reliable. That led to my not being a religious person, because I didn't trust that narrative. I started from scratch at 19

"Salvation Boulevard" film director George Ratliff, on losing his religion Wall Street Journal, 7-15-11

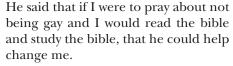
If Tony and Craig want to exchange vows before God and their friends and family, where's the harm in that? It's not as if they're offending the sanctity of life like those wicked birth control users who will toil for all eternity in hellfire.

Statement attributed to Pope Benedict in story headlined "Vatican reverses stance on gay marriage after meeting Tony and Craig"

The Onion, 7-14-11

I am quite spiritual. I believed in the fairies when I was a child. I still do sort of believe in the fairies. And the leprechauns. But I don't believe in God. Actress Helen Mirren

Esquire magazine, August 2011



Andrew Ramirez, alleging what Dr. Stephen Lutz, a counselor at Bachmann & Associates (operated by Rep. Michele Bachmann's husband) told him

The New York Times, 7-16-11

The law of the land should not be stopped by a collar or a crozier.

Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, who is Catholic, on a report showing the Diocese of Cloyne failed to report sex assault allegations against 19 priests from 1996 to 2009 to police

The Irish Times, 7-14-11

The rape and torture of children were downplayed or "managed" to uphold instead, the primacy of the institution, its power, standing and reputation.

Prime Minister Enda Kenny, addressing lawmakers on Vatican cover-ups of clergy sex abuse

The New York Times, 7-21-11

The religious institution, the leader of the religious, and the political leadership, should be separate. I myself combine! So my statement, my explanation, become like hypocrisy — saying something, doing something different. Religious institutions, political institutions, must be separate. The last several decades I emphasized that.

Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama, explaining to U.S. congressional leaders why he stepped down as political head of the Tibetan government in exile *CNN*, 7-7-11

Of course, America was established as a secular nation specifically so as to avoid the doctrinaire cruelty that comes with state religion. If you ask me, atheists see America exactly the way it was intended to be: Godless.

Columnist Darrell Dawsey
Michigan Live, 7-5-11

What is [Anthony] Weiner guilty of? He's guilty of being too photogenic. But is taking pictures of your junk and emailing them something you'd expect from a congressman? No. This is something you'd expect from a priest. **CBS-TV host David Letterman** 

"Late Show with David Letterman," 6-14-

[W]e are witnessing an aggressively promoted version of our history and heritage in which America is called a "Christian nation." This "Sunday school" version of our past has gained currency among conservative television commentators, school boards that have rewritten state textbooks and several GOP presidential candidates, some of whom trekked to Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition conference in early June 2011.

Kenneth C. Davis, author of "Don't Know Much About History: Anniversary Edition"

CNN, 7-4-11

It is imperative that politicians, educators, business leaders and others in a position to influence public opinion, both in their own communities and nationally, acknowledge their real beliefs if they are atheists or agnostics. And if that means that some atheists will lose elections or face hostile religious believers in their offices and community organizations, there is always an initial risk in standing up for one's convictions. On a personal level, neither well-known writers nor anonymous bloggers have anything like the influence of a brother, a sister, a friend or a neighbor who also happens to be an atheist. It is impossible to speak with moral force in a muffled voice from the closet. Come out, come out, wherever you are.

"Spirited Atheist" columnist Susan Jacoby, "Atheists should study gay political playbook"

Washington Post, 6-29-11

Someone has to stay behind to make sure the sinners eat veggies, recycle, wash behind their ears and tip servers. "Man on the street" Zak Oliver, answering why he was still in Montana after the Rapture

Missoula Independent, 5-26-11

I'm sort of agnostic. I grew up Catholic and switched to Episcopalian in college because I sang in church to have money to buy pizza and french fries.

Robert Lopez, co-writer/composer/ lyricist, "The Book of Mormon"

Time magazine, 7-25-11

I have told them that they should do the test to measure my anus to see whether it is dilated.

Fr. Andrés García Torres, a Spanish Catholic priest ordered by his bishop to take an HIV test and undergo counseling because he was shirtless in a photo with a Cuban seminarian at the shrine of Fátima

El País, 7-8-11

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### First place: FFRF Herbert Bushong High School Essay Contest

### 'Great Flood' drowns creationists



By Anna Liu

he elementary school art room was bustling, filled with the cacophony of children's voices. Amidst the chaos, I sat in quiet concentration, molding my clay into a dolphin. The girl across from me was making an angel. In the process of polite conversation, I felt myself being sucked into the topic of religion like a goldfish in a flushing toilet bowl. For years I've had to lie, change the subject, or completely bail on the conversation. Such is the life of a closet atheist. But for once, it occurred to me to stop hiding.

"I don't go to church," I said aloud for the first time in my 11 years of life. My friend's eyes widened.

"You mean you aren't Christian? You

mean you don't accept the love of Jesus into your heart as our Lord and savior after he died on the cross for our sins?"

It was unusual to see this girl, who was usually more concerned with cookies, rattling on.

"Um — no."

"Oh my God. I'll bring you a bible tomorrow! You need to read it cover to cover and pray every single night, OK? You need to listen to me because I am honestly concerned for your soul. Don't worry, you can still be saved!" she promised, as if to assuage some genuine fear of mine.

This wasn't the worst such incident, and it certainly wouldn't be the last. I grew up in Arlington, Texas, smack in the gaudy, gleaming buckle of the bible belt. I was an unusually petite girl, and somewhat less than imposing. It would have been easy, and surely preferable, for me to simply surrender to the pressures of Christianity.

But at some point, it is no longer possible to hold back your ideals, especially ones that have been molded and shaped so concretely by your own reason for your whole life. Something had to come out. I was given my opportunity when a high school YAPA (Young Adults for Political Awareness) Club debate focused on the issue of whether or not creationism should be taught in schools.

The debate room was divided. Those who opposed teaching creationism were isolated in a corner of the room. Creationism supporters domi-

## You have them cornered,' the debate proctor whispered.

nated 90% of the space, and included some of my friends and biggest academic rivals, those who would like to believe that they were in possession of greater mental faculties than I.

The debate proceeded, with the majority party zealously declaring that school was teaching us to be bad Christians, sinners or (God forbid) atheists. Those on my side could hardly get a word in. I sat in the back and seethed as the debate, one-sided and without direction, continued.

Something compelled me forth. The voice that issued from my small frame carried an unusual strength. It was a voice that had been silenced for years and now forced its way out. It was a voice that silenced the seemingly ceaseless stream of babble from the opposition.

My statement was simple: "School teaches us how to think. In every science class we have ever taken since the beginning of our education, the very first thing we are taught, without fail, is the scientific method. You don't need me to repeat it. It basically states that *everything* we believe should be deduced through rational processes, observation, data, evidence. *What* exactly

about creationism has been deduced from these processes? Therefore, why should we learn creationism as if it were a supported fact? School should teach us to think rationally, to use logic, *not* to take blind leaps of ideological faith."

The room was silent. The debate proctor leaned toward me and whispered, with a smile, "You have them cornered."

After a few moments of pregnant silence, the opposition offered many and varied retorts, but it was painfully obvious that none could actually respond to my argument. I left the debate in silent victory.

From that day on, I have carried my ideals proudly. I did not broadcast them obnoxiously without being asked, but I no longer felt a need to hide. The way I think and view the world, my beliefs and ideals, shape me as a student and a person. I am able to see and understand the world for what it is, without being clouded by a faith that would have me ignore my natural and logical understanding of the world.

Anna Liu graduated third academically in her class of 823 with a 4.0 GPA at James Martin High School, Arlington, Texas. She will major in bioengineering at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena with an eye toward working in medical research or drug development. Anna was assistant concertmaster of the school symphony and violinist with the Youth Orchestra of Greater Fort Worth. Anna recieved \$2,000 from FFRF

### Second place: High school essay contest

### A pledge of reason

By Jesse Miller

don't think I believe in God." I was unprepared for the reaction that this innocent remark elicited. The mutual look of shock and horror that fell across my parents' faces was almost comical. I may as well have told them that I was going to run away from home, which at that point was not looking like such a bad option.

At the age of 10, I was unaware of the negative connotation that atheism had in a uniformly Jewish family. I had begun to feel like an outcast because I lacked the religious enthusiasm shared by nearly all of the students at my Hebrew school. I felt ostracized by my own family, which struggled to accept my nonconformist views.

To some people atheism may seem like the easy way out, but I was forced to devote every last ounce of courage and integrity in me to remain an atheist. Only through reason was I able to avoid succumbing to ignorance and faith.

It was not until my senior year of high school that I finally felt a sense of pride for fighting for what I knew to be self-evident.

Groans had emanated throughout

Butterflies fluttered in my stomach as I approached the podium.

the classroom as our U.S. government teacher announced that each of us was to present a speech to the class on a political issue that we felt strongly about. But unlike the rest of the class, I knew that this was the perfect opportunity to express my opinions that, due to reticence, I had kept to myself.

The topic I chose for my speech was the unconstitutionality and immorality of the incorporation of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. With this speech, I not only wanted to overcome my apprehension of expressing my opinions regarding religion, but I also hoped that I could inspire my peers to become freethinkers.

The first part of our assignment was to survey the class and find out their opinions about the speech topics we chose. I cannot say that my results were too surprising. Out of 25 students, 23 supported the use of the words "under

God" in the pledge. Even my teacher believed that the phrase was constitutional. But I did not let the results of the survey weaken my resolve. In fact, the outcome only further encouraged me to stand up for my beliefs. I worked long and hard on my speech, which I entitled "The Pledge of Faith."

"Jesse Miller, you're up next," my teacher said. Butterflies fluttered in my stomach as I approached the podium in front of the class. I looked up from my speech, which I had memorized, and into the faces of my fellow students. My gaze was met with many indifferent and insipid stares. Undeterred, I recited my speech in as energetic a voice as I could muster.

By the end, it was clear that I had piqued the interest of most of my classmates, who asked questions or posed counterarguments. After an entire class period of discussing my topic, I was filled with a sense of success, knowing that I had spread awareness on an issue that was important to me.

At the end of the day, my teacher approached me. She commented that she was very impressed with the way that I had stood up for my beliefs, even though most of my classmates, herself included, had contrasting opinions. She also admitted that my speech had caused her to rethink her position on



he issue

The fact that I had inspired my teacher to question her own views made me, for the first time, proud to be a freethinker.

Speaking in 1962 about the U.S. mission to the moon, John F. Kennedy said, "We choose to . . . do [these] things not because they are easy, but because they are hard. . ." The quote perfectly encapsulates the ideology that has enabled me to remain a free-thinker throughout my life. I am a free-thinker not because it is effortless, but because it is demanding. It required courage to recite a speech that few of my fellow classmates agreed with.

But the sense of accomplishment and pride that comes from promoting reason is always worth the hard work.

Jesse Miller, Hurleyville, N.Y., will be a freshman at Cornell University and will pursue a degree in engineering. After the 2010 Haiti earthquake, he set out jars at businesses and raised \$3,600 for the relief cause (including the dollar-for-dollar match by companies supporting the International Rescue Committee). Jesse plays guitar, paints with watercolors and played first singles on his school tennis team. Jess received a \$1,000 schlarship from FFRF.

#### Third place: High school essay contest

### The Grimm truth

By Max Sandler

ve enjoyed fantasy, fiction and fairy tales since I was young. The ability to enter into worlds without the horrors of our own can be a truly magical experience.

With the U.S. currently involved in three wars, negative regard of our country from much of the world, record budget deficits and high unemployment, wouldn't it be great to live in a world where the biggest threat was a giant who might eat your cows?

While it's nice to have an escape, we are taught from a young age that at some point we have to know when to stop pretending and take things seriously. This is my problem with religion: It seems like one gargantuan fairy tale.

People don't like the plane of existence they find themselves on, so they have to delude themselves into thinking that this is only a test run. If they stay in line with their religion's rules, they'll be able to someday live in a fairy-tale land of winged creatures with harps. While that may be reassuring

and sanity-saving, it's not reality.

Whenever I get asked why I don't believe in God, or any form of religion, for that matter, I try to explain my thinking to people in a nonoffensive way. Nevertheless, people often don't take kindly to my logic. One time in particular sticks out. In my U.S. history class in my junior year of high school, we had reached the subject of communism and the Cold War. One girl raised her hand and started implying that the reason that the USSR failed was because it was not a capitalistic, Christian nation.

That contention, of course, frustrated me. I calmly responded that she couldn't truthfully say that, since one of the world's most economically successful nations right now, China, is one of the least religiously affiliated countries, according to recent surveys. She, obviously annoyed, said she didn't care, and predicted that anybody who didn't believe in God would ultimately fail.

I laughed in disbelief, saying, "Religion does not automatically make someone a good person. A lot of times,

## People often don't take kindly to my logic.

people don't know how to ask if a person or country is morally good, so they ask if they're religious instead. Some of the biggest atrocities, mass murdering and prejudgments come from religion, and I find it incredible that people constantly turn a blind eye to that."

I had so much more to say, but I was cut off by the silence of my classmates and the glare of my professor. The girl sat down and was quiet for the rest of the class, and although I felt slightly awkward for causing a scene, I was happy I had voiced my opinion. I didn't know what people thought, but it didn't really matter to me.

Later that day, a boy came up to me and said, "Good job," while I got a lot of head nods from others. Even more surprising, my teacher made a point of commenting, "Makes great contributions to class" on my progress report. I



was proud to be an atheist in those moments, and I'm still proud to be one.

I enjoy the ability to form my own opinions and not to have had a cookie-cutter set of ideals set out for me at birth. I enjoy being accepting of different cultures, regardless of their beliefs.

Most of all, I enjoy not basing my life on a fairy tale and being able to make this life, my only shot, count.

Max Sandler graduated from Fairfield Warde High School, Fairfield, Conn., and will attend Keene State College, Keene, N.H., to pursue his interests in film and writing. Max was president of his school's Human Relations Club. He likes horror films, karate and video games. Max received a \$500 cash scholarship from FFRF.

#### Fourth place: High school essay contest

### 'They're ruining our communities'



Elizabeth Sweeny

By Elizabeth Sweeny

hat's what the flier handed to me at church said when I was in sixth grade: "They're ruining our communities." It was an invitation to hear a guest speaker at my church. The topic was opposing gay marriage.

My stomach tightened. I don't remember if I even knew anyone who was gay, but I knew what I had just read was wrong. I thought the point of church was to learn to love everyone. Why were they bringing in a speaker to preach hate? Did the people around me think that was OK? Did the reverend?

My family and I had always gone to church somewhat regularly. I had been there enough that I knew and trusted many of the congregation members. When I saw that flier, something changed inside me. I felt *so* ashamed to be associated with a place that blatantly wanted to exclude people.

More than anything, I felt betrayed. Whom else didn't the church approve of? I didn't know. In my sixthgrade mind, I feared that maybe they wouldn't like left-handers like me or redheads like my neighbor. It seemed like playground bullying, except in this case, it was one institution tormenting a whole group of people.

I decided I did not want to go back to church. I told my parents that and explained why. Thankfully, because my mother is liberal and my father a lapsed Catholic, my reasons were accepted.

Since then I have encountered some conflict. Some people find me contemptible for denouncing religion, while others simply offer to "pray for me." I've received my share of looks of pity and revulsion. What these pious people do not realize is that I have similar feelings about them. It saddens me that people justify discrimination in the name of the bible.

From sixth grade until now, my aversion to the church has only been confirmed. Some of the most important and loved people in my life have been gay. As an adult, I look forward to participating in the legal system in a way that will hopefully change some of the current laws made by states not so separated from the church.

Today I am a proud agnostic. I do not condemn those who have faith, but I do condemn those who use their faith as an excuse to harass others. I believe in science, equality, rationality and love. I feel lucky to have learned about myself at such an early age, and hope that less-accepting individuals will one day have a realization akin to mine.

Elizabeth Sweeny graduated from Plum Senior High School, Plum, Pa. She will attend the University of Missouri or Indiana University to study archaeology, art history and anthropology. Her activities included dance team, Habitat for Humanity, peer tutoring, Girls Leadership Association, YMCA volunteer, powder-puff football and musical productions. Elizabeth received a \$300 scholarship from FFRF.

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### Honorable mentions — high school

All honorable mentions received \$200 from FFRF, \$100 of that generously donated by retired educator John Moe.

### The great burrito religious debate



By Sierra Buehlman Barbeau

Gould God microwave a burrito so hot that even he couldn't eat it?"
"God can do anything!"

"But then he'd be able to eat the burrito, right?"

Of the six of us in this study hall discussion, Audrey was agnostic, Cody a Lutheran from the Lutheran school, and Maria a Latina Catholic. Julia, who raised the burrito question, is a semi-Lutheran and "coming out of the closet" lesbian. Lastly, there was Will, the atheist who didn't know the term existed.

"What'd you say you were?" Will asked me.

"Atheist," I said. "I don't believe in God."

"Me neither," said Will. "None of it makes sense to me."

"I don't understand," said Maria. "How do you think the universe was made?" She was doing math homework and copying answers from the back of the book.

"The big bang," said I.

"Now that's what doesn't make any sense," Maria said. "What created the big bang?"

"Physics," I said. "What created God?"

"That's a question for the pastor," Cody said.

"There are so many questions in religion," said Audrey. "There are so many different takes on everything. What's the difference between Catholics and other Christians?"

"Catholics worship more saints," Maria said.

"Are you cheating out of your math book?" asked Julia. "Isn't that a sin?"

"It's OK. I'll confess it on Sunday!" Maria said.

"I have a question," I said. "What's the difference between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?"

"They're all the same thing!" Julia said. "Like how the cake, frosting, and filling are all different, but they're all part of the same Ho-Ho!"

"So why are you Catholic, Maria?" asked Will.

"God brought us here to America from Mexico and helped us be strong," she said. "He helped me to learn English and made me smart so I could do well in school." I wondered how she could give God credit for her intelligence and bravery.

"Why are you Lutheran, Cody?" I asked.

He was quiet for a moment, the fun and laughter leaving his eyes. "It's a long story. God brought my mom home safe from Iraq, he protected me when my first stepdad beat me with a baseball bat, and he's given me courage to move on."

"Aren't those terrible things for a God to do?" I muttered.

Cody: "God sends us misfortunes to make us stronger for greater sadness in the future. I wouldn't be able to get through life without him. I almost killed myself earlier this year."

Amid the silence at that moment, I was glad to be an atheist. This "good" God let your mom go to Iraq and your first stepdad beat you, I thought. That's a monster, a heartless God who's hurting you, not protecting you. God shouldn't make you go through that.

I'm glad and proud that I see that and don't have to tell myself that my troubles stem from a "loving" god making me stronger. I don't have unanswered questions about how god came to exist. I know that my successes and faults are my own, and that life's troubles happen to everyone, not because god wants me to learn a lesson.

We left study hall that day laughing about the burrito question. The debate had made us a tight group of friends.

Sierra Buehlman Barbeau, Waterloo, Wis., will attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study astronomy and physics. Sierra loves languages and music and plays trombone and other instruments.

### Freethinker vs. hard-core Catholic



By Kayla Fischl

The article we were discussing in our Theory of Knowledge class at 7:30 a.m. was about a woman who was raped while walking her dog. Her neighbors found her with the dog at her side and called an ambulance. The rapist was later apprehended, but the woman became pregnant due to the rape. She chose to have an abortion.

"That is so wrong! Why would she murder an innocent child?" asked a very religious classmate. "God loves all his children, and she murdered one of them!" the girl cried.

The whole class agreed. I felt like I was in some kind of twilight zone, or maybe I was being punked. I'm not one to make speeches or voice my thoughts, but this was more than I could stand. I stood up and explained how she was violated in the most heinous way and had her life put in jeopardy by a man who left her for dead on the curb.

She didn't want to live with the constant reminder of the horrible crime. I was appalled that someone could say what she did was wrong. The girl and I went back and forth before the teacher stopped what was starting to look like a heated argument. He asked the class what they thought. Unbelievably, they still sided with her. I sat down and was quiet for the rest of the period.

I had an epiphany right there in class. I was not wrong. I was very right.

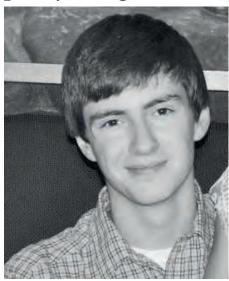
What the woman did was exactly what I would have done. I was baptized Catholic but never seriously practiced it. I always rejected the idea of religion because I knew that 90% of the people who say they're devout Catholics are hypocrites, sinning every day and then confessing just so they can do the same thing the next day.

I can honestly say this was the day I became a proud agnostic. Freethought, and having opinions that make sense, are beautiful things. It didn't matter whether the whole class agreed with me or no one did. If I had to stand alone to voice my opinions on right and wrong, then I was going to do it.

It was this day, in Theory of Knowledge class, that really changed my life for the better.

Kayla Fischl, Cape Coral, Fla., will be attending the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, which has campuses in Los Angeles and New York, to study musical theatre. In grades 10-12, she was a Keep Cape Coral Clean volunteer. In grades 9-12, she acted with Alliance for the Arts and Cultural Park Theatre.

### Jane was plainly wrong



By Samuel Z. Luke

My road to atheism has been a long one, with no single, great moment of realization. But the debate over the existence of God is something I've contemplated since I was young. My parents believed in God because my grandparents had raised them to believe. They took me to church because their parents had taken them. It was simply "what was done."

Luckily, my parents also encouraged me to think for myself, and my father's journey to atheism opened the door for me. I was being exposed to both church doctrine and freethought through my father and the books and articles he had.

As a high school junior, I was in the middle of reading Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, an incredible book that I am still attempting to understand fully. I'd set it down on an empty desk behind me, where a girl I'll call Jane and some other classmates saw it.

I liked Jane and still do. She's kind, intelligent and not at all judgmental, I thought then. That's why I was surprised to hear her say, when the conversation turned to the book, "I just don't think books like that should be allowed to be printed at all."

I didn't say a word, just turned around and picked up my book. I was amazed at first, but as I thought about it, the amazement dissipated. I know some people are close-minded and quick to pass judgment about religion. Jane's comment made the point that in a country built on freedom, in a time filled with people striving for equality, millions of people can and do suddenly reverse and skew their thinking anytime religion is involved.

Right behind me was a very sweet and forward-thinking girl who was ready to throw free speech in the dirt because she didn't agree with a book discounting her religion. I was suddenly very proud that I was not like that.

I think for myself and formulate my own ideas about everything in my life, based as much as I can on reason and fact and not on tradition or ancient books. I'm barely out of high school, but I hope to go on to learn much, much more about everything I possibly can.

I'm extremely proud of my determination to reason out my life on my own, and Jane's comments remind me how lucky I am to be able to think as freely as I do.

Samuel Zachary Luke, Dunkirk, Md., will attend Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., to pursue a B.A. in English with a creative writing focus. He worked for three years in the theater department's sets and technical areas and was also stage manager.

> scored a victory by taking a shot at one of the few atheists in our school. I don't hide my nonbelief. I talk about my views in the cafeteria, even as people sometimes look at me sideways and exclude me from some of their in-groups.

> I understand why most people crave unconditional love, but why turn to a mute, faceless god? Couldn't a teddy bear suffice? At least you can hold a teddy bear. I'm also not one to shout, "God is a load of crap," so I pause before answering,

> I realize I'm angry. I've never been angry over religion before. Disgusted, exhausted and troubled, but not angry. I must look angry too, because a friend says, "Come on, let's play some basketball." I can let the moment pass



#### **Emily Shuck**

and not stand up for what I believe. No one will say anything. It would be easier on my friends if I'd say nothing, but I can't. That's the moment I make up my mind to be more than a casual nonbeliever. Just because I don't believe in god doesn't mean I don't believe in anything.

I'm not angry at my challenger for needing something to have faith in. I'm furious at being attacked because I choose to rely on something more than just an irrational, damaging myth that should have been shed long ago. I believe in logic, reason and fact. I don't need a god to guide me or to be a good person. I use my head. I'm rational, logical and moral. I was 13 when I stopped believing in a god. I actually remember the day I made that decision because I felt nothing but emptiness where god was supposed to be.

My anger subsides as I think of the words I need to say.

Before picking up a basketball, I turn to him and say quite calmly, "I have morals, but not because a fictitious god tells me what they are supposed to be. I don't need a supreme being ready to smite me to make me do the right thing. And I don't need the fear of hell to make me a good per-

Emily Schick graduated from Byron High School, Byron, Minn., and will attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth this fall to study psychology and biology. She founded the BHS Go-Green Club (with some resistance from school administration), eventually raising \$5,000 to put solar panels on the school roof. Emily was active in student council, pep and concert bands, drama, clarinet, choir and peer tutoring.

#### **Secular morals:** A plea

By Benjamin Sudbrink

some sort of rejection of morality, a statement of desire to "sin" without repercussions. Apart from completely missing the point of atheism, this gross simplification serves to damage the secular morality from which every functional, rational society derives its

I have had countless arguments with theists who have stated that atheism allows the nonbeliever to act with impunity, to take whatever liberties they choose with their actions, because no supernal force dictates a code for them to live by. This is false.

There is, in fact, an inherent weakness in the appeal to a higher power. I challenge any theist to give me an example of a god who disagreed with its followers on some important issue, and made its opinions known. Because no one can prove they are communicating directly with a higher power, assuming one exists at all, anything the higher power is purported to say will necessarily agree with the person invoking the higher power, making the supposed statements of the higher power functionally useless.

Instead of saying "God says," the theist is really saying "I say, but God backs me up." This is the major weakness in the theistic claim; morality really comes from the person, and any invocation of a deity is simply employing an ecclesiastical smoke screen.

The time has come for what Richard



**Benjamin Sudbrink** 

Dawkins calls a social consciousnessraising. We must expose the carefully hidden weaknesses and glaring flaws at the heart of the religious beast, and we must show them not just to nonbelievers but to everyone. We must show this vileness to the average believer, who probably has not actually read the book they claim is the source of every aspect of their moral code, who has no idea that Jesus sanctions the murder of those who do not agree with him (Luke 19:22-27), who doesn't even know it's there to find, because their preacher never told them about it, and they felt no need to read it.

It's time to show people how to escape the chains of religion. We can show them that life without their imagined god would not dissolve into madness, and that life is not empty without a celestial monster lording over your every move. We must disseminate knowledge through every sort of media. We must continue the work of Hitchens, Dawkins and Dennett in dragging religion into the 21st century, and we must promote our secular morals as an alternative.

We must show that morals built from the self, and from the community, can evolve. Moral strictures handed down on glorified paving stones

become stagnant and, because of the magisterium built up around them, refuse quite spectacularly to shift with the times. Secular morals derived from society change with that society.

Religious leaders fear this change. It loosens their grip on the minds and pocketbooks of their brainwashed flocks, because there is nothing with which to threaten them. This very change is what gives a secular moral system its strength and makes it inherently superior to any religious system.

Benjamin Sudbrink, Silver Spring, Md., will attend St. Mary's College of Maryland to major in philosophy. He participated in high school debate and founded the Society of Rational Inquiry, an after-school club which held student-led presentations and discussions. He enjoys painting, sculpting, writing and making music.

#### For the love of dinosaurs!

By Megan Wickens

learned at a very early age that religion is not my cup of tea. My family only attended church for a few years of my life, but it was enough for me to know that nobody has any concrete evidence of a higher power.

Ironically, one attempt to save my soul from eternal hell led me to become a freethinker and reject religion. A friend had invited me to a children's sermon at her church. The topic was dinosaurs, my favorite. I already knew that I wanted to be a scientist. But this sermon had me gritting my teeth, clenching my fists and concentrating all my energy on not getting up and screaming at the top of my 7-year-old lungs.

The sermon wasn't about dinosaurs. It was an hour of a preacher telling us that dinosaurs never, ever existed! He said that there was no proof, and anytime anyone said that dinosaurs existed, we should ask them if they can give us proof. "You fool!" I thought. "There's a ton of proof for dinosaurs! What there is no proof for is your stupid faith!"



#### Megan Wickens

That was my last religious service.

The only things we can truly believe in are those that can be observed. We can make conclusions based on observations. In my experience, religion has no basis in fact.

Megan Wickens, Livonia, Mich., will attend Albion College, Albion, Mich., where she will major in biology with a concentration in environmental science. Her interests are cross country and track, playing violin and working as a community service volun-

#### Morally good with no god

**By Emily Schick** 

w can you have morals if you don't believe in God?" A friend of a friend's question catches me offguard in the gym right before a game of lunchtime basketball.

I hardly know this guy, but do know he claims to be a devout Christian, which is common in my small Minnesota community. It's obvious he's throwing down a public challenge with this question, and people are waiting to hear my answer.

I look at my inquisitor and feel my face flush. He looks smug, like he's oo often, atheism is shown as

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#### Protests gubernatorial pandering

### FFRF responds to 'The Response'





FFRF's mobile billboard circulated for eight hours during the all-day prayer rally Aug. 6 instigated by Gov. Rick Perry (see Steve Benson's caricature above) at Reliant Stadium in Houston.

Local plaintiffs in FFRF's lawsuit against Gov. Rick Perry's organization of an evangelical prayer rally called "The Response" were honored at an Aug. 5 "feasting and non-prayer" dinner party. A capacity crowd of 70 Houston-area FFRF members attended the event at the Black Labrador restaurant, on the eve of Gov. Perry's Day of Fasting and Prayer. Above are Kay Staley, Kristin Ames, W.C. "Rusty" Lyon and Stacie Gonzalez. Not pictured, plaintiff Scott Weitzenhoffer. FFRF'ers were entertained at the piano with a mellow concert by FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, who performed "Nothing Fails Like Prayer," "Battle of Church and State," "Beware of Dogma," and a new song composed for the occasion (directed at Perry), "Get Off Your Knees and Get to Work."



Texas FFRF'er Jack Craft (left) with Eileen Gardner, Taylor Myers and Don Myers. Taylor, an FFRF legal intern, was integral in helping with the Foundation's legal complaint and Houston protest. Eileen and Don are her proud parents.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker protested eight hours on a day when the heat index hit 107 degrees.

### View slideshow with more protest photos:

ffrf.org/news/blog/we-protested-perry-in-100-plus-heat-and-survived/



The family that protests government prayer together stays together!



FFRF'er Jana Dubke braved the heat to create some heat for Perry.



A "godless goddess" with a better motto than America's current one.



Tommy held FFRF's banner for several hours.



Nonreligious veterans gathered at Lake Hypatia, Alabama, on the weekend of July 4, 2011, next to FFRF's monument to Atheists in Foxholes. The monument was erected "in memory of ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES and the countless freethinkers who have served this country with honor and distinction . . . with hope that in the future humankind can learn to avoid all war." To view a slideshow of photos capturing this years event, visit:

ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia/advance-photos/



Pat Cleveland, an FFRF officer and director of the Alabama Freethought Association, the chapter that puts on the annual Lake Hypatia "Glorious Fourth" in rural Alabama. And veteran Bill Teague, pictured by the impressive Atheists in Foxholes monument he carved for FFRF.

### Turn page for more photos



Speaker Mark Zumbach, director of Triangle Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter in North Carolina; Annie Laurie Gaylor, Wisconsin codirector of FFRF, and speaker Steve Benson, Arizona, editorial cartoonist, Arizona Republic, pose in front of FFRF's colorful sales table at the Lake Hypatia July 4th event in Alabama. The annual gala is hosted by the Alabama Freethought Association, an FFRF chapter, and takes place in FFRF's air-conditioned southern Freethought Hall.

## Celebrating Reason Lake Hypatia, Alabama July 1—3, 2011



Speaker William Dusenberry, an activist, with the Tulsa FFRF chapter and his wife, Jackie Dusenberry, Oklahoma.



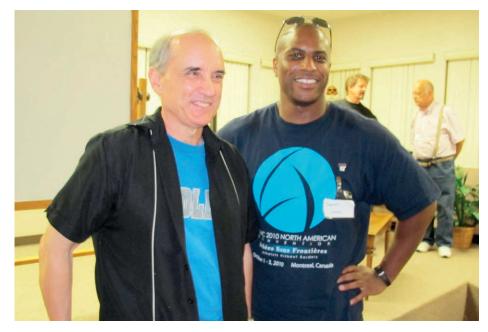
Group photo of attendees beside FFRF's Atheists in Foxhole monument. About 120 FFRF'ers from around the country attended.



Participant Tori Smith, Alabama, whose geodesic dome home survived the recent Alabama tornado.



Speaker Benjamin Burchall, founder of Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, Wisconsin, and "atheist in a foxhole" veteran Jessale Lewis, Georgia.



USS Randy Flynn, named in memory of a longtime Alabama member, cruising on tranquil Lake Hypatia.



Freethought student activist honoree Duncan Henderson with his brother, Brendan (holding some baby frogs).



The crowd responded warmly as Duncan Henderson talked about fighting ignorance in Alabama and for his right to start a freethought club.



Steve Benson, who donated his caricaturing talents to FFRF, with Barbara Scurry, Georgia, and her portrait.



"Friendly neighborhood atheists" Aleta Lodendecker, Laurie Webre and Nan Einhart enjoy cameraderie in the piney shade at Lake Hypatia.



Duncan Henderson took questions after showing the "Nick News" segment introduced by Linda Ellerbee in which he was featured. Duncan received \$1,000 from FFRF as a student activist awardee.



Steve Benson and Dan Barker, a godless duo, shake hands after providing the Saturday night entertainment: Tunes 'n' Toons, an artistic collaboration. They are both former missionaries. Musician Dan was a teenage evangelist who gave up the ministry and religion in his 30s. Editorial cartoonist Steve, the grandson of Mormon president Ezra Taft Benson, was (what else?) a Mormon missionary.



Mark Zumach, dynamic director of the Triangle Freethought Association, a North Carolina FFRF chapter.

Dan Barker autographs his book, Godless, for Barbara Scurry.



Speakers Betty and Jim McCollum, Arkansas. Retired attorney and champion of the First Amendment Jim McCollum talked about how religion crept into the secular Pledge of Allegiance. Jim aired the Peabody Award-winning documentary, "The Lord Was Not on Trial Here Today," about the Supreme Court case his mother brought and won on his behalf when he was young.



Friends Wanda Alexander and Sheila Dotson.



Claudia Turner, who turned 89 on July 2, was sung a round of "Happy Birthday."



That's Alice Cleveland, Alabama, who leads the annual poetry reading at Lake Hypatia Freethought Advance. Cups of "sweet tea" in foreground.



Ruth Henderson, North Carolina, Pat Cleveland, Alabama, and Karon Park, Georgia, in front of Lake Hypatia.

### Documenting how God's 'acts of God' devastated Alabama

Day of Devastation: Photos and Stories of Alabama's Deadly Tornado Outbreak is the title of a 128-page book published by the Birmingham News, Mobile Press-Register and Huntsville Times. From the preface:

"April 27, 2011, is a day Alabama will never forget. It was the worst natural disaster in our history, a day when more than 50 tornadoes hit Alabama, taking the precious lives of more than 230 Alabamians."

Huntsville FFRF Lifetime Member **Don Worrell** notes that according to many of those interviewed in the book, God was also busy that day *saving* lives, here and there, all over the place, presumably in accord with His Divine Plan (willy-nilly lifesaving it apparently wasn't).

Some excerpts from the book:

Pearline Hinton and her teenage son Kendrell huddled in the bathroom as a killer tornado bore down on their Tuscaloosa apartment complex. Kendrell said he started to say his prayers. "I was just saying, 'Jesus, Jesus,' I was just praising the Lord, and that thing was just coming."

Tuscaloosa's Rosedale Baptist Church, which suffered major damage, held an outdoor service the next Sunday. About 100 church members and guests stood up to sing "Victory in Jesus."

Pastor Louis Johnson reminded them that God is good. "As we look at the destruction around us, the first question that people are going to ask is, 'Would a good God let this happen, or does God even exist?' God not only exists, but He loves us. Every single person here today had their homes ravaged and all their possessions destroyed. But God placed His hand over them and protected them."

Mike Dabbs recalled, "I prayed to God to protect us, but if He had to take someone, to take me." All were spared. The house was not.

"Ten thousand horses came over my house, and they were chasing a freight train," she said. "All I could do was scream, 'Jesus, keep us wrapped in your blood.' "

Rev. Jesse Jackson was guest preacher at Pratt City's Bethel Baptist Church the next Sunday. "The flip side of this tragedy is opportunity," he told the congregation. "We derive beauty from the ashes. Our faith will not refrain from the face of tragedy."

Two days after the storm, 75-yearold Anne Muse kept repeating a phrase for strength, "God is able. God is able." Her daughter, Alondan, 50, and grandson, Alvilante, 14, were sent to Birmingham hospitals with broken bones and head injuries after their modular home was ripped apart. "But God never puts more on you than you can bear," Mrs. Muse said. "God is able,



Don Worrell, who was wounded as an Army infantryman during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, at FFRF's Atheists in Foxholes monument at Lake Hypatia, Ala.

but I don't know how much more I can bear."

T.J. Hagler, 79, looked at the remains of his shattered house. "I survived," he said, shaking his head. "God's got plans for me yet."

On May 5, funerals were held for the Hallmark family, of Arab, all killed in the tornado: Phillip, 56; his wife Ann, 54; their son Shane, 37; Shane's wife Jennifer, 31; and 17-month-old Jayden, Phillip and Anne's grandson.

Rev. Jeff Rowan, who officiated, referred frequently to the bible and Job's lifelong suffering. "But I know that my Redeemer lives," Rowan said, ending with a poem: "Do not hold on to the hurt of this world. It will only make you sad. But a life in Heaven will make you glad."

Mark Wigley, a truck driver, had the top floor of his home ripped off. "But the good Lord was looking after us," he said. "We can replace all of this junk."

Mason Josey, 63, whose house was damaged substantially, said, "Any time I feel sorry for myself, I realize I'm really very fortunate. God blessed me. But it's hard."

Reflecting on a verse from Psalms 30, Pastor Lowell Douglas of Gray's Chapel Baptist Church reassured the grieving that trouble does not last always. "Weeping may endure for a night," he read, "but joy comes in the morning."

After Josh Rosencrans walked away from the tornado without a scratch, he pointed to a bible verse which had been taped to his bathroom mirror: "The Lord will guard you from all evil. He will guard your life."

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### It Pays to Complain

#### New Jersey adds 'No help me god' oath

In August 2010, FFRF Staff Attorney wrote a letter of complaint on behalf of a teacher to the New Jersey Department of Education to object to the following "Oath of Allegiance/Verification of Accuracy" on its teacher li-

, do solemnly swear, (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey, and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States and in this State, under the authority of the people, so help me God."

Elliott noted that the oath doesn't allow an appropriate alternative for teachers with no belief in a god or teachers who adhere to religions such as Jehovah's Witnesses.

FFRF got a response July 11 from Acting Education Commissioner Christopher Cerf, who said the department will add a nonreligious affirmation which omits "so help me God."

#### Ohio district takes FFRF's flier advice

The Garfield Heights City School District in Ohio settled a lawsuit filed against it by the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian legal group based in Arizona. The suit, brought by ADF on behalf of a mother's group, alleged that the group's free-speech rights were violated when Maple Leaf Intermediate School declined to distribute fliers and permission slips promoting after-school Christian programs.

In previous years, the school was the subject of several FFRF complaints about staff unconstitutionally sponsoring a "field trip" to a nearby church during the school day. Superintendent Linda Reid canceled the field trip last year after an FFRF complaint. Reid drew the ire of the mother's group this year when she also declined to distribute fliers for their after-school biblethemed events.

In a May 2011 letter, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor suggested a solution to the lawsuit. Gaylor noted that problems arise when teachers distribute religious fliers: "I encourage you to consider amending the district's policies so that only district-sponsored announcements are sent home with students. This avoids the difficult First Amendment issues that arise when the school becomes involved in distributing materials for other groups."

The district, taking that advice, agreed in the settlement with ADF to amend school policy so that outside groups won't be able to send fliers home with students. Groups can place limited quantities of fliers in the school office. The district also agreed to pay \$3,000 to ADF attorneys to settle the suit, which was dismissed June 21.

#### Gideons booted in Arkansas school

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a letter of complaint July 7 to Superintendent Greg Murry, Conway [Ark.] Public Schools, about illegal Gideon bible distributions at Ruth Doyle Intermediate School.

According to FFRF's complainant, the Gideons were positioned outside the cafeteria/auditorium exit where a mandatory assembly was being held.

The complainant said several families complained to Assistant Superintendent Carroll Bishop about the Gideons' presence, and said the response they received was the district "[is] looking into this for the future."

Murry emailed back to FFRF within hours to say that the district, in response to an earlier complaint, "would discontinue the distribution of Gideon bibles in our district. I have also informed the Gideons of this decision as well."

Elliott noted, "Although it appears that the Conway Public School District reached the decision to bar Gideon bible distribution before receiving FFRF's letter, this incident demonstrates that concerned families and citizens can effectively, and should, petition school officials to end this unconstitutional practices in their schools."

#### FFRF forces sticker cover-up option

Something's constitutionally amiss when the city of Blue Island, Ill., reguires vehicle owners to advertise the 150th anniversary of a Catholic parish. So said a July 6 FFRF letter of complaint to city officials.

Blue Island, a south Chicago suburb of about 23,000, levies a municipal vehicle tax and issues stickers that must be displayed inside the windshield.

"The [2011-12] stickers give the impression to observers that the city approves of and wishes to celebrate St. Benedict Roman Catholic Church," FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote. "The stickers say 'Blue Island' and 'St. Benedict' in large lettering and depict city buildings on an official, and required, vehicle sticker."

Underneath in large letters is "150 years." Federal courts have consistently struck down symbolism that ties cities to religion, Elliott said. "Secular organizations certainly could have been honored, as there is no First Amendment problem with honoring the Blue Island Fire Department."

The city claimed the sticker acknowledges a special anniversary for St. Benedict. To that, Elliott rejoined, "Can you imagine the outcry if the city 'acknowledged' the opening of a Muslim mosque or the founding of an atheist group in Blue Island?'

About two weeks after FFRF's letter went out, the Blue Island city attorney called Elliott and said that Mayor Donald Peloquin had instructed police not to cite residents who chose to cover up the religious part of the stickers. The city is working on a policy to avoid the issue in the future.

#### **Ohio BMV removes** religious materials

The Foundation received a complaint in February about religious bumper stickers and posters prominently displayed at an Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles branch in Columbus. FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott alerted the bureau by formal complaint of the serious constitutional issues raised by the display of those materials.

While the BMV didn't officially respond to the letter, FFRF recently contacted the complainant, who said that a visit to the branch showed the religious materials were not on display.



#### Postal regulation enforced

On behalf of a local postal client in McHenry, Miss., FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a letter July 21 to Postmaster Relief Jeanette Walker about a vacation bible school poster at a service window. Walker replied July 27 that the poster in question and all others "have been removed and no further ones will be allowed to be posted."

### '9 Commandments' judge in legal trouble

James "Jay" Taylor, a Juvenile Court judge in Hawkins County, Tenn., received a public reprimand from the Tennessee Court of the Judiciary. The reprimand stems from charges involving Taylor's promotion of a "Citizens Heritage Display" containing the Ten Commandments. The June 6 reprimand said Taylor violated the Code of Judicial conduct by speaking before a legislative body in support of the display and by collecting funds for its construction.

Taylor has been dubbed the "Nine Commandments" judge because his original public proposal mistakenly omitted the prohibition of adultery. FFRF sent a letter of complaint in July 2010 to the Hawkins County Commission about the proposed Justice Center display. The letter noted several historical inaccuracies, along with statechurch separation issues. The proposal has yet to come to fruition.

Taylor's conduct violated a judicial canon requiring judges to avoid conflicts of interest. Judges are not permitted to appear at public hearings, solicit funds or use "the prestige of judicial office for fund-raising."

Taylor is also the subject of a \$3 million lawsuit filed in January by a former employee, Julie Rasmussen, who alleges he violated her civil rights and made "unwelcome and unwanted" sexual advances and unlawfully fired her as a court youth service officer in 2010.

He was also sued in May for \$2.25 million by Melody Benson-Roberts, a former client who alleges Taylor committed "fraud, conversion, fraudulent concealment of a cause of action, breach of contract and malpractice" while representing her.

From beginning to end, each band classmate Harrison Hopkins' objection worked toward bringing the word of God to the masses in the form of relentless heavy metal.

Frank Serafine, review of Scream the Prayer 2011 concert in Nashville, Tenn. metalunderground.com, 7-6-11

There will be a prayer on June 2nd! Your not taking that away from us! Enjoy burning in hell!!

Facebook post by Hannah Higgins about classmate Harrison Hopkins' objection to prayer at their high school graduation in Laurens, S.C.

Cranston Patch, 6-24-11

You know you have to be a real low life to not have prayer at graduation. What kind of stupid messed up person would want that. If you don't want to here a prayer close your damn ears. They make earplugs. Get a life you freak.

Facebook post by Kyle Eustace about

to graduation prayer

Cranston Patch, 6-24-11

My family says in all their years of living, they've never seen that. I feel it's a unique mark and has meaning. I don't know what God has planned, but I feel like he's going to use me and I'm ex-

Audreanna Phelps, Wichita, Kan., who saw "God" spelled out in a vein in her

Fox 25 Boston, 6-15-11

They have ruined and tainted our ability to secure good relationships and to make women into good wives.

Ty Adams, producer of "The Real Housewives of the Bible" DVD, on how TV reality shows don't help her and other women learn how to "keep

CNN, 7-5-11

### Sharing the Crank Mail

Below, a sampling of email — grammar and spelling uncorrected — from people who don't much like FFRF.

#### Freedom from Religion

HEY, IF YOU SATANIC MOTHER FUCK-ERS TRY TO TAKE AWAY MY RIGHT TO PRAY IN THE USA. I WILL COME OVER THERE AND SHOOT AND KILL EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU SATANIC FUCKING BASTARDS!!!!!!!! WHY DON'T YOU TRY THIS WITH THE FUCK-ING MUSLIMS YOU GOD DAMN FUCKING COWARDS???!!!! YOU'RE ALL FOR REMOV-ING THE RIGHT OF CHRISTIANS TO PRAY, BUT YOU WON'T DO A FUCKING THING ABOUT THE MUSLIMS!!!!!! MY GREATEST WISH WOULD BE TO LINE YOU FUCKING BASTARDS UP AGAINST A WALL AND MA-CHINE GUN YOU DOWN AND PUT YOU IN THE GROUND WHERE YOU BELONG!!!!!! John C. Williams, Hawaii

[FFRF has reported this threat to police.]

#### you are bad people,

what give you the right to keep God out of our schools. It is because of people like you and other Liberal nuts that our GREAT COUNTRY has the moral issues it dose. You make me sick — mike rogers

#### Freedom From Religion

What a bunch of fucking dikes! What kind of operation do you run telling people NOT to practice the preach. Has god granted you some kind of certificate to tell people not to listen to what people are preaching? God is the ALPHA OMEGA and your bullshit signs will not be anywhere near GOD'S LAND if I have anything to say about it. Hire another fucking nigger to blab! — Larry Thompson Jr.

#### Hello

ALL OF YOU UNGLY FUCKERS CAN EAT SHIT AND GO TO HELL YOU FUCKING QUEERS...YOU FUCKIN DEVILS...YOU WILL ALL GET CANCER AND DIE...YOU WORTH-LESS FUCKHEADS...YOUR ALL FULL OF SHIT AND WILL NEVER FUCKIN WIN. I SPIT AND SHIT ON YOU SICK MOTHER FUCKERS. SUCK DICK AND DIE YOU FAGOTS. — Blair Scott

#### free loading freeks

I don't understand you freeloading freeks makeinig a living with this crap,get a life,don't know why anybody would support crap like this,you should get with the muslins you are about the same shitheads — mike grunewald

#### Wrong

think you all should be in court for this kind of judgement no matter how you try to turn the world into this non-believing shit , you all are gonna be judge in the lake of fire and no matter what you say you cant change history , this country was MADE FROM GOD AND THE WORLD EXISTED FROM GOD , but thats not in my place too judge yall but give yall my comments but thats on you guys .. have a nice enterinty\* in hell — Sarah Baker

#### get a grip

you and your ilk are satans spawn — bruce bruce

#### Go fuck yourself

Perry can attend a prayer meeting if he wants, your attempt to stop him is distasteful, illegal and repugnant to everyone. GO FUCK OFF YOU STUPID CUNT! —  $John\ Q$ 

#### re

Boy you people are definately a bunch of friggin MORONS. Satan is definately your god. — *Yora Nassole* 

#### Rick Perry

How does this prayer conference effect you in any manor?? — D Shaffer

#### **Rick perry**

Seperation of church and state is not found in ANY of the documents that this country was found on. The term seperation of church and state was written in a letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Dunary Baptists. — *Aaron Bailey* 

#### your STUPID law suit

I SEE PRES> REAGANS SON ON YOUR HOMEPAGE---POOR MAN MUST BE TURNING OVER IN HIS GRAVE — TRUE AMERICAN

#### Re

It would be so nice to do to atheist, Muslims and gays what Hitler did to the Jews. — *Teresa Garcia* 

#### Relgion

God rules over any law that this country has. I am sick of all of these cults. If I could, I would put you all with the mormans, muslums, kkk, and other folks like you and kick you all out of this country. America is for God fearing people, not people like you all. — kenneth jones

#### Ten Commandments Giles County Virginia

You people want to waste your time and money persecuting and prosecuting our school system for a display of a MORAL CODE represented in a historical document called "the holy bible" At the same time it is perfectly okay for the religion of SCIENCE to be taught daily. It is disheartening to me to see monies so flagrantly wasted on issues so stupid when they could be spent on a good cause like fighting for our liberties and against the injustices being commited by our federal government!!! — Wesley Beckner

#### you make me wanna vomit in my mouth

One of these days you will be accountable and when you do, your heart will sink out of your asshole when you realize how disgustingly wrong you have been. — Bob Cassidy

#### you being simply out of your minds

If we had the national day of prayer for gay people would you oppose that i bet not. — you smelllikesatan

#### Prayer gets results

You say prayer does not produce results. Governor Perdue of Georgia asked God to break the drought and one year later the Environmental Protection Agency declared the drought over. — Martin Van Horn

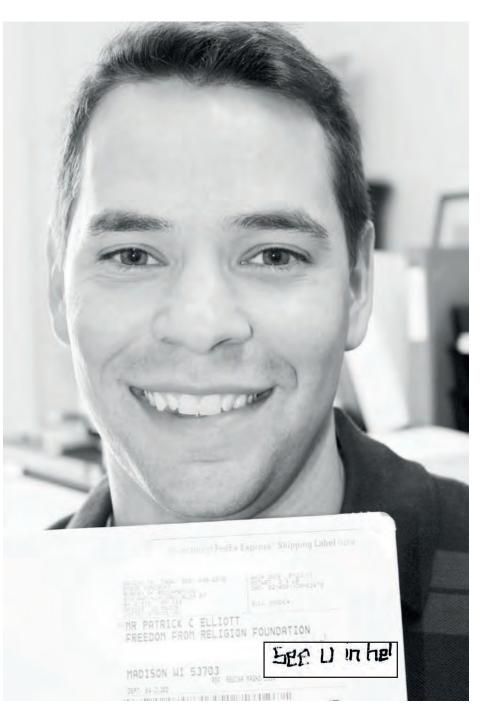
#### freedom

What a bunch of garbage! You don't want to have you kid say "under God" just have her keep her mouth shut. If you are non believers, thats fine and you can live your lives as you see fit....but please let the rest of us do the same. You must think our founding fathers were all dummies when they put the constitution together. I think you should all start another planet and move there!!! and leave the MAJORITY of us alone — Philomena Miller



#### Homophone zone

Todd Rochleau, Missouri, showed his non-Christian charity by blacking out the name and number of a local church.



### Special delivery

FFRF staff attorney Patrick Elliott holds a FedEx delivery in which an employee (as yet unknown) scrawled, "See u in hel." Patrick notified FedEx of the tampering. No apology was received. Patrick regretfully must decline the invitation!

#### **Living for Jesus**

It is so sad that organizations such as yours can be allowed to sue businesses or people for the dumbest reasons. There will be a day when you will have to stand before our maker and answer for this stupidity. I declare all of this in the name of our HOLY JESUS. — Sister to Jesus GOD

#### prayer in Pulaski,TN schools

I think that if someone complained and didn't like the prayer. They should be man or woman enough to be know and come forward instead of hiding behind some group that apparently does not have enough to do that it interferes in others lives where it is NOT wanted. — jennifer hinton

#### Why?

Hi Dan: I am from Australia and just read your CV of all your 'post-Christian' achievements after a following a link on the 2010 atheist convention website.

Can I ask: Why do you hate Jesus? — Enquiringly, Graeme White

#### **National Day of Prayer**

I'm thinking about starting the FFCFF, the Freedom From Control Freak Foundation. You have the right to be wrong, so you live your lives and get the hell (not cursing, actual place) out of ours. — Jerry Livingood

#### God is all we have

Without God we are like a house built on sand, having no foundation. So if you want to live in a Godless nation then do it on your own and stay out of our Constitution with your corrupt views and standards. You are headed in the wrong direction and you are looking for those who will go with you. We all know wherre that is....nowhere I want to be —  $Barbara\ Jansen,\ Mass.$ 

#### Confused Christian

What confuses me is your belief that Christian faith is somehow bad for society. So is it your contention that perfect application of

Christian doctrine would somehow be bad for society? What harm is being done by saying "In God We Trust"? What harm is done in having a national day of prayer? — *Brian Back* 

#### Prayer

You poor, pitiful, Hell-bound creatures. I'll be praying for you all. — Christway@calvary.com

#### Good luck but you are SOOOO OFF base your IDIOTS!!!

Your Idiots the government isn't making anyone pray you may if you choose to. Get your facts straight. Learn to read and think for yourselves. —  $Alice\ Lewis$ 

#### Religior

I question religions as well but even more so i question you morons that give ignorance and stupidity a new name. You idiots dont even know what your talking about . You morons take dense and stupidity to an even greater level. Your not even worth mentioning. I dont need losers like you speaking for me and if anything i speak for myself and i dont need you losers help and if anything your fucking up our country you loser idiots. — *Richard Thorpe, WA* 

#### freedom of speech

if someone is praying and i don't want to hear it i will plug my ears, or get up and leave. i do believe in god,and free speech, but you try to silence people so you are no better than hitler him self, but i guess you think he was right to kill jews. you people make me sick. i don't know what this country needs to be better, but it does not need you stealing money from tax paying citizen, to fight you. — wade griggs, my god bless you

#### Freedom

You are working for Satan and his cause! When you see the church disappear, you will KNOW who you have sided with. May God have mercy on you at the Great White Throne judgement. — Because He Lives, Millie Shrader, Okla.

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### Black Collar Crime Blotter

#### Compiled by Bill Dunn

#### **Arrested / Charged**

Rev. Vincent P. Panepinto, 69, Flower City Park, NY: 3rd-degree grand larceny. Panepinto, former pastor of Our Lady of the Americas Catholic Church, has admitted to the Diocese of Rochester that he stole about \$10,000 from the parish, court documents said.

Panepinto most recently was sacramental minister at St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. He was put on administrative leave in March after an allegation of sex abuse against a minor in the 1960s was deemed credible. Source: Chronicle & Democrat, 7-21-11

Rev. John Pierre, New Orleans: Fraud. Pierre, pastor of the Living Witness Church of God in Christ, is accused by the Louisiana Inspector General's Office of wasting or misappropriating about \$160,000 in state and private money earmarked for renovating buildings to house substance abuse treatment programs.

The report also alleges that in 2008-09, the church failed to report almost \$93,000 in taxable income. Source: Gonzales Weekly Citizen, 7-20-11

**Haroon Masih**, Muneerabad, **PAK**: Rape. Masih, pastor of an unidentified church, is accused of raping a 14-year-old for several months and forcing her to have a back-alley abortion.

"I thought my daughter was helping him teach children at Sunday school every week after school. She used to say she needed to stay behind late, and we didn't think twice of it," the girl's mother told police.

The girl told police Masih gave her druglaced drinks and had friends stand guard outside the room. Two men were arrested as accomplices

"I treated the girl after her abortion. She was suffering from terrible internal bleeding and she could easily have died. We have performed surgery and she is stable now," said Dr. Fauzia Virk, Allied Hospital obstetrician. Source: Express Tribune, 7-20-11

An **unidentified Catholic priest**, 46, is in custody after admitting sexual abuse of 3 boys since 2007. "The suspect has substantially admitted to the accusations during police examination," said police spokesman Joachim Grande in the north German town of Braunschweig.

Authorities are also reexamining the 2006 death of a 25-year-old man at the priest's apartment that was ruled a suicide. They've set up a special investigation commission called "Peccantia," Latin for "sin." Source: Reuters, 7-19-11

Rabbi David Wax, 49, and Judy Wax, 47, Lakewood, NJ: The Waxes, husband and wife, are charged with kidnapping. David Wax is also charged with making a threat by phone to the alleged victim's father.

The federal complaint says the alleged victim, Yisrael Briskman, and his former wife were engaged in a contested divorce in a rabbinical court in Israel. Briskman then moved to the U.S. but refused to consent to the divorce (called a "get" under Orthodox Jewish law), allowing his former wife to remarry.

On Oct. 16, 2010, Briskman alleges he was beaten and robbed at the Wax home during an attempt to get him to consent to the divorce after he'd been lured there to work on colloborating on a book about the Talmud. He was released after being forced to call his father to tell him to pay \$100,000 to the woman seeking the divorce. Source: U.K. Telegraph, 7-19-11

Rev. Charles Okera, 26, Kitale, KEN: Murder. Okera, a Pentcostal Assemblies of God pastor, is accused of stabbing and killing Scolastica Abei, 17, in the neck 7 times. A watchman told police he witnessed the incident. The girl earlier told her parents that she was pregnant by Okera. An autopsy showed she was carrying six months pregnant with triplets. Source: allafrica. com, 7-18-11

Sara Roseberry, 21, Columbus, IN: Distribution of methamphetamine and trafficking with an inmate. Roseberry allegedly smuggled meth and tobacco inside the binding of a bible to a male inmate at the Jennings County Jail in Vernon. Source: WLWT News, 7-14-11

**Rev. Dennis Brown**, 66, Eldora, **IA**: 3rd-degree sexual abuse. Brown, pastor at Ivester Church of the Brethren, is accused of having a sexual encounter in Waverly with a 15-year-old he met online. Brown lives part of the year in Verona, **VA**. *Source: Waterloo Courier, 7-13-11* 

Rev. Aaron Hodges, Greenwood, SC: Ill treatment of animals. Hodges, pastor of Durst Avenue Church of God, is accused of neglecting dogs at the parsonage. Deputies found 3 puppies dead in the yard and 6 other dogs in various stages of neglect. The mother dog appeared to have been trying to nurse the dead Labrador puppies. The remaining dogs were taken to an animal shelter. Source: WSPA News, 7-13-11



**Frank DeTucci**, 70, Queens, **NY**: Official misconduct, sexual misconduct and engaging in a criminal sex act. DeTucci, a state correctional chaplain and Catholic deacon, is accused of paying an inmate on 2 occasions to let DeTucci perform oral sex on him. A guard noticed him kneeling in front of the prisoner. *Source: Daily News*, 7-12-11

Peter L. Moses Jr., 27, Durham, NC: 2 counts of 1st-degree murder in the deaths of Jadon Higganbothan, 4, and Antoinetta Yvonne McKoy, 28. Authorities said Moses lived with 3 women and 9 children and belonged to the Black Hebrews religious sect. The women called Moses "Lord" and considered themselves his wives

Authorities said Moses shot Jadon in the head because he thought he was showing homosexual behavior. They believe he killed McKoy because she was infertile and wanted to leave the group. Also charged in connection with the deaths are Jadon's mother, **Vania Rae Sisk**, 25, **Lavada Quinzetta Harris**, 40, and **Larhonda Renee Smith**, 40.

The dead woman's mother, Yvonne McKoy, said she can't believe her daughter is gone. "I'm just grateful to God that justice has been served and God is going to do what God is going to do," McKoy said. Source: AP, 7-7-11; WRAL News

Rev. Franklin Huntress, 78, Marblehead, MA: Felonious sexual assault of a child under age 13. The retired Episcopal priest was extradited to New Hampshire for alleged incidents in the 1980s. He resigned during a probe by the Diocese of Massachusetts last winter stemming from a complaint by a person who reported being sexually abused as a child by Huntress in 1974.

The investigation also revealed Huntress was arrested for child sexual abuse in England in 1994. Source: Salem News, 7-11-11

Rev. Joseph M. Leal, 36, Henryetta, OK: 2 counts of using technology to engage in sexual communication with a minor. Leal, pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church, is accused of "sexting" a 14-year-old girl he met at a church camp.

The girl told police Leal's spiritual texts gradually turned sexual, at one point expressing guilt that his wife was home sick when all he could do was think of the girl's "gorgeous face and smoking hot body."

"I'd probably have to kick his butt if he ever touched one of mine," Henryetta grandmother Sherron Rivera told KTUL News. *Source: KTUL News. 7-6-11* 

**Enrique Alcaraz**, 45, Elsie, **MI**: Sexually abusive activity and possessing and distributing child pornography. Alcaraz was fired as youth minister at Church of the Living Word.

He's accused of soliciting and receiving nude photos from a child and sending nude photos to another child. He's no longer is a licensed foster parent, a state spokesperson said. He resigned from the Ovid-Elsie School Board when allegations came to light. Source: Lansing State Journal. 7-2-11

Rev. James R. Schook, 63, Louisville, KY: 3 counts of 2nd-degree sodomy and 4 counts of 3rd-degree sodomy. Schook, former pastor at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church, was suspended from clerical duties.

The charges involve 2 boys and date from the early and mid-1970s. 2nd-degree sodomy involves "deviate sexual intercourse" with a child who is 12 or 13, while 3rd-degree charges involve victims who are 14 or 15. Source: Courier-Journal, 6-30-11

Isaac Zucker, 47, Long Island, NY: Theft. Zucker, treasurer of Congregation Aish Kodesh, is accused of stealing \$600,000 from the Woodmere synagogue. He fled after being confronted and was arrested at a Holiday Inn near an airport in Ronkonkoma. Source: N.Y. Post, 6-3-11

Patrick Korzon, 49, Springdale, PA: Multiple counts of forgery and theft while serving as treasurer at St. Mark's Lutheran Church from 2005-10. More than \$87,000 is involved. He's also accused of criminal use of a computer and a telephone and receiving stolen property. Source: Valley News Dispatch, 6-29-11

Roger E. Rickman, 65, Tracy, CA: 7 counts of felony sexual assault, including lewd acts on a child. Rickman, founding pastor of Fresh Anointing Faith International Christian Church and chaplain at local VFW and American Legion posts, is accused of molesting a 7-year-old female congregation member in his car. He denies the charges.

"There was an extensive investigation, which included a search and arrest warrant," said police Sqt. Tony Sheneman.

The girl's mother told police her daughter said the pastor had a vibrating tool in his car and asked her to use it while he was driving her home from school. Source: Stockton Record, 6-28-11; Tracy Press, 6-24-11

James A. Hulgan, 40, Leeds, AL: Lewd and lascivious behavior and indecent exposure. Hulgan is general manager of Briarwood Presbyterian Church's radio station and manages the church's video ministry. He's also president of Best View productions.

Police said he propositioned a girl, 15, and a woman, 23, at a beach while he was naked from the waist down. He allegedly called them to his van and asked if they knew where there was a nude beach and told them to get in, which they didn't. Source: Birmingham News, 6-23-11

Rev. Joseph R. Fultz, 46, Walworth, WI: 5 counts of failing to report child abuse or neglect. Fultz, former pastor at Grace Evangelical Free Church, allegedly withheld information about a "wiener game" played by 6 boys, ages 5 to 12, at the church, at Faith Christian School, at Fultz's home and at a Fontana resort. It's not alleged any adults were involved in the incidents referred to as boys being "sexually curious."

Fultz told police he went to Faith Christian "to talk to the children about the repeated incidents and told them not to let anyone know what was going on," the complaint alleges. *Source: Janesville Gazette, 6-23-11* 

Willard Yoder, 21, Milroy, IN: 4 felony counts of solicitation of sex from a minor. Yoder, a member of an Old Order Amish community, allegedly sent 600 "sexts" to a 12-year-old girl, whose parents found the messages.

In one text, Yoder told the girl, who he thought was 13, that "the proposed sex act would happen inside the buggy," police said.

Police set up a sting outside the Takehome restaurant in Connersville. Police said Yoder was cooperative and "walked his horse and buggy around the building and tied it to a post outside" before being arrested. Source: The Smoking Gun. 6-21-11

Mark W. Michaels, 53, Upland, CA: Oral copulation with a minor and lewd act with a child. Michaels, choir director at Bethany Baptist Church in Montclair, met the alleged victim, a 15-year-old girl, 2 years ago at the church.

Police on routine patrol allegedly found Michaels and the girl "committing lewd acts" in Michael's car parked in an alley. Source: Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, 6-6-11

#### Pleaded / Convicted

**Rev. Michael A. Crippen**, 60, Duenweg, **MO**: Pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography. Crippen, pastor at First Baptist Church, admitted he downloaded 10 images in 2009 from a Dutch website.

At least 100 images were found on 2 computers, including children under age 10. A plea agreement said Crippen stated he'd prayed for God to intervene in his pornography problem.

## 'This priest was so proficient; he abused everywhere he went.'

Attorney Robert Pastor

Source: KY3-TV, 7-20-11

**Rev. Santos Rosado**, 45, Bethlehem, **PA**: Pleaded guilty to sexual assault. Rosado, pastor of Bethlehem Community Fellowship, is accused of molesting a female congregant starting when she was 14. Authorities allege he hid the girl from her family when she ran away.

Rosado is also accused of serially raping a girl for 7 years, starting in 1993 when she was 12. She attended Centro de Adoracion, where Rosado was pastor. He pleaded guilty in November to stealing money from a casino he also worked at and was sentenced to 3 to 23 months in prison.

His daughters — **Linette Rosado**, 26, and **Lydia Rosado**, 23 — and a nephew, **Gamaliel Rosado**, face charges for threatening an alleged victim. *Source: Express-Times, 7-14-11* 

William Casey, 77, Greeneville, TN: Guilty of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct and 2 counts of aggravated rape. Jurors convicted Casey, a former Catholic priest, of molesting Warren Tucker as a teen in 1978-80 in a church rectory and in Tucker's home.

Tucker called Casey "a master of deception." He goes on trial in September for allegedly abusing Tucker in Virginia. He pleaded guilty to crimes against nature in North Carolina in 2010.

"He is evil, a coward and a predator," Tucker said. "I have nothing to say to a human being like that. The people have spoken for me." Source: tricities.com, 7-14-11

**Ernest W. Cadick**, 60, Louisville, **KY**: Entered an Alford plea to 3 counts of theft by failure to make required disposition of property over \$300. Cadick, a traveling evangelist, allegedly bilked 3 victims out of \$19,500.

He earlier pleaded guilty to 17 counts of wire fraud. Court records said Cadick solicited \$718,000 from 17 persons by representing himself as owner and operator of Kingdom Oil. He met potential investors at church functions or through contacts with churches and solicited funds under the pretenses of investing in oil and gas ventures. *Source: kentucky.com*, 7-12-11

Fr. Raymond-Marie Lavoie, 71, Quebec: Pleaded guilty to 21 counts of sexual assault, indecent assault and gross indecency involving 13 boys who attended a Catholic boarding school near Quebec in the 1980s. All were ages 12 to 15

Lavoie also faces a class-action lawsuit that alleges up to 5 priests systematically abused boys in 1960-87 at the Seminaire St. Alphonse, which closed in 2001. The suit alleges priests "consulted with one another and conspired to determine which students they would abuse, and divided [the victims] up amongst themselves." Source: Vancouver Sun, 7-11-11

Rev. Cornelius J. Breslin, 59, Wilmington, DE: Pleaded guilty to theft of more than \$100,000. Breslin, former pastor at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception and St. Patrick's Catholic Church, is accused of writing checks to himself for more than \$358,000 from parish accounts and depositing the money at a different bank.

Breslin was suspended by the diocese and ordered to leave his residence at St. Patrick's. *Source: delawareonline.com. 7-7-11* 

Joshua Amoroso, 22, Colorado Springs, CO: Pleaded guilty to sexual assault on a child. Amoroso, since fired, was a youth counselor at Gateway Church when he met the 14-year-old girl with whom he started a 3-month relationship. The girl told police Amoroso first seduced her at her home while her stepmother was asleep.

The girl also alleged they had sex at Amoroso's home on North Carefree Circle while his wife was at work and at the home of a Gateway pastor while Amoroso was watching the house.

When confronted with a lewd email message, Amoroso first claimed he wanted to teach his wife a lesson about spying on his correspondence, police said. *Source: Colorado Springs Gazette, 7-5-11* 

**Rev. William H. Marshall**, 88, Windsor, **ON**: Pleaded guilty to sexual abuse, including fondling, fellatio and masturbation, of 16 boys and a woman in assaults dating back to 1952. A Basilian priest, Marshall taught at Catholic high schools in Windsor, Sudbury and Toronto.

"Take off your glasses," Ted Holland told Marshall during his victim impact statement. "I want to hit you."

#### 'I'll ask myself forever, why did this monster enter our lives?'

#### Minn. victim's mother

At one point, Marshall turned to his victims and said, "May Jesus Christ our brother forever walk by your side and help you carry this cross that I so callously placed on your shoulders."

The abuse often began under the pretense of inspecting boys' bodies for muscles. Victims testified other priests and teachers walked in on the abuse but never reported it.

Rev. Timothy Scott, Basilian Fathers general councillor, called the testimony "gut-wrenching" and apologized. A victim's father pointed at Scott and said he and his once-devout family will never trust another priest again. Source: Windsor Star. 6-6-11

#### Sentenced

Rev. Jerry L. Cannon, 63, Dry Ridge, KY: 17½ years in prison for possession and distribution of child pornography. Cannon, founder of the nondenominational Church of God admitted posting porn on 13 different Facebook accounts. Source: Florence Times Daily, 7-20-11

**Rev. John L. Edwards Jr.**, 54, Daytona Beach, **FL**: 45 days in jail and 2 years' probation for battery on a law officer. Edwards, pastor at Apostolic Lighthouse Church, will be released to preach on weekends.

After he was pulled over by police at 3 a.m., Edwards allegedly became belligerent and grabbed a female officer's Taser and fired it at her chest. He was also ordered to attend anger management classes. *Source: CBS News, 7-15-11* 

**Fr. Edward McGuinness**, 56, Limavady, **N.IRE**: Pleaded guilty to being in charge when unfit through drink or drugs and was fined £300 (\$479). McGuinness' blood alcohol was 4 times over the legal limit. His car hit a roundabout and stopped against the gates of the Donegal Prime Fish depot. *Source: BBC News, 7-7-11* 

Rev. Daniel J. Dahlberg, 68, Foxboro, WI: Pleaded no contest to misdemeanor theft and was sentenced to 2 years' probation, 100 hours of community service and restitution of \$13,000. Judgment on a no-contest plea to felony theft was deferred for 2 years.

Dahlberg resigned as pastor at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Hudson after the money from a charity account disappeared. He has since undergone treatment for gambling addiction. Source: Superior Telegram, 7-7-11

#### Civil Lawsuits Filed

The Catholic **Diocese of Orlando**, **FL**, is being sued by a man, 52, who alleges he was sexually abused as a teen multiple times by **Thomas Sykes**, a priest St. John Vianney and Bishop Moore Catholic High School in the mid 1970s. The **Franciscan Friars of the Atonement**, based in New York, are also named. Sykes, now dead, was defrocked and later married.

The suit alleges the diocese agreed in 1994 to pay indefinitely for the victim's therapy but stopped paying in 2008. *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 7-20-11* 

A suit alleges the Catholic **Diocese of Charlotte**, **NC**, covered up sexual abuse of a teen by **Fr. Richard Farwell**. The man alleges Farwell molested him in 1983 in the rectory at St. Ann Catholic Church in Charlotte, in 1984 in a car near the Blue Ridge Parkway and in 1984 at the rectory of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Salisbury.

Farwell pleaded no contest in 2004 in a separate case, a charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor

The suit alleges that the diocese knew of Farwell's "problems" but did nothing. The plaintiff attempted suicide after the alleged abuse. Source: Charlotte Observer, 7-20-11

Alfred Moya, 70, Phoenix, is suing the Catholic Dioceses of Gallup and Santa Fe, NM, and the Diocese of Corpus Christi, TX, alleging that the late Rev. Clement A. Hageman sexually abused him as an altar boy when he was 12, and that officials in all 3 dioceses covered up the abuse.

Moya's lawyer, Robert Pastor, said he expects to file another suit on behalf of at least 2 more men who say Hageman molested them. Pastor said 9 people have already settled claims with the Diocese of Gallup.

"This priest was so proficient; he abused everywhere he went," Pastor said. Source: N.Y. Times, 7-10-11

Msgr. John J. Laferrera, 64, Livingston, NJ, and the Archdiocese of Newark are being sued by 5 men who allege Laferrera molested them in the 1970s and early 1980s. Laferrara has taken a leave of absence from St. Philomena's Catholic Church while a diocesan board reviews the allegations.

Samuel Rivera, 45, said it has been "very hard to keep this inside. I hadn't even told my wife until recently, and I've basically known her since grammar school." He alleged he was mo-



lested between the ages of 12-14 at the Immaculate Conception Church rectory in Newark and at Laferrera's vacation home in Lanoka Harbor. Source: Star-Ledger, 7-5-11

Patrick O'Connor, 53, a former Ohio priest, the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, former Bishop Anthony Pilla and St. Borromeo Seminary are being sued by the alleged victim of O'Connor's sexual abuse. O'Connor, pastor at St. Jude Church in Elyria, pleaded guilty in 2009 to corruption of a minor and was sentenced to 90 days in jail and 3 years' probation.

At his sentencing hearing, O'Connor apologized to the teen, who was 15 in 1997 when the lawsuit said the molestation began after he met O'Connor playing basketball at a playground near the church.

The boy alleges he and O'Connor drank and smoked and watched pornography together. Source: Chronicle-Telegram, 7-1-11

Two Minnesota men are suing former Boy Scout leader Peter Stibal II, 46, for sexually abusing them as minors in 2008-09. One suit also names the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis and Mary, Mother of the Church Catholic Church, where Stibal was a church youth leader and chaperone.

Stibal was sentenced in June to 14 years in prison and 7 years' probation for molesting 4 Scouts, ages 11 to 14, in Troop 650. "I'll ask myself forever, why did this monster enter our lives?" said one victim's mother at sentencing. Source: Star Tribune, 6-24/28-11

Three men are suing the Lutheran Church of San Pedro y Pablo, Bell Gardens, CA, for allegedly covering up abuse by former pastor Frank Brundige, who is serving 24 years in prison for child molestation. Larry Stoterau, president of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, is identified in the complaint as an official with knowledge of Brundige's behavior from 1989-2007 at the church.

The suit alleges other church officials knew as early as 1991 that Brundige had "boys routinely spend the night with him one at a time." Source: L.A. Times. 6-23-11

#### **Civil Lawsuits Settled**

The Catholic **Order of Carmelites** settled a Florida suit for \$1.75 million. The suit alleges the order failed to supervise **Fr. William Wert**, who was criminally charged with having a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old boy at the order's Venice home and at a motel.

The Carmelites put Wert on probation but let him live on their property and use a new Ford Mustang and the Internet, the boy's attorneys said. *Source: Herald-Tribune, 7-15-11* 

#### **Legal Developments**

Robert Ellmore, 73, a former New South Wales Anglican priest who sexually abused girls over 4 decades, was released from prison after serving 9 years for molesting 3 girls ages 8, 10 and 12. He was on parole in 2001 for child sex offenses committed in the mid-1970s when he was accused of molesting the 8-year-old daughter of a couple he had befriended.

Under Ellmore's 3-year extended supervision, he can't change the color or style of his hair or facial hair, join or attend a club or group, use the Internet, or have a sexual relationship with anyone without the approval of authorities. He also can't have contact with children under 16 without an adult approved by authorities present and is not allowed near schools, parks, day care centers or playgrounds. Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 7-22-11

The San Francisco district attorney will not charge **Fr. William Myers**, who was removed in May as pastor at St. Raymond Catholic Church in Menlo Park, **CA**. Myers was put on leave after it was reported he followed a 17-year-old boy into a Ross Dress for Less store dressing room. The boy's father was present.

The Archdiocese of San Francisco is interviewing candidates to replace Myers, said spokesman George Wesolek. Wesolek said candidates will be "thoroughly vetted," adding that the process isn't perfect.

"The only thing that came up in Father Myers' background was that he was in therapy for dealing with his sexual identity," Wesolek said. Source: Menlo Park Patch, 7-15-11

A judge in bankruptcy court confirmed Chapter 11 reorganization of the **Society of Jesus Oregon Province**, paving the way for 534 creditors to begin receiving payments for abuse suffered at the hands of Jesuit clergy.

The Jesuits will put \$48.1 million in a settlement trust. Insurers will contribute \$120 million.

Part of the settlement will go to Kathy Mendez, 56, who accused **Fr. John Morse** of molesting her at St. Mary's Mission boarding school in Omak, **WA**, when she was 11 in the mid-1960s. At the bankruptcy hearing, she described the day she went to Morse's office to be disciplined and was sexually assaulted.

Her attorney, Blaine Tamaki, said about 60 people, male and female from ages 5 to 15, allege Morse assaulted them. Morse lives in a Jesuit home in Washington.

"He would bring in students into his principal's office and sexually molest them on a systematic and routine basis," Tamaki said. "He was there for at least 6 to 8 years." Source: The Oregonian, 7-7-11

#### **Allegations**

An audit at St. Leo Catholic Church, Bonita Springs, FL, revealed financial irregularities with Fr. Stan Strycharz as pastor.

"At least \$1 million in unsupported or questionable expenses remain, for which Fr. Strycharz has offered neither justification nor satisfactory explanations to the independent auditors," Bishop Frank Dewane wrote in a let-

ter to parishioners.
Strycharz has been on paid leave for a year.
The diocese has yet to decide if civil, criminal or canonical action is warranted, a spokesman said. A separate allegation claims Strycharz has fathered a child. Source: Naples News, 7-18-11

Former Dutch Bishop Cornelius Schilder, 69, may be charged with sexual abuse of a minor male in Kenya 18 years ago, said the Public Prosecutor's Office in Arnhem, which is investigating a claim by Michael ole Uka, 32. Uka alleges he was molested by an Irish priest, starting when he was 7, and "passed around" to other clergy, including Schilder. After being called to Rome in 2009, Schilder went into immediate retirement at a Mill Hill Missionaries house in Oosterbeek. Source: Radio Netherlands. 7-5-11

#### Removed / Resigned

Fr. William M. Walsh, 65, Danvers, MA, former pastor at St. Mary of the Annunciation Church has voluntarily been removed from the clerical state, the Archdiocese of Boston announced. As such, Walsh is is barred from working in any capacity as a priest except to give last rites to the dying.

Walsh was put on leave in 2004 after allegations he sexually abused a child in the early 1970s. He was also accused of molesting boys while serving at St. Edward's Church in Brockton and at St. Joseph's in Hyde Park. *Source: Salem News, 7-20-11* 

Cardinal Justin Rigali, 76, head of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia since 2003, resigned. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver will replace him.

Grand juries in 2005 and 2011 said the archdiocese protected dozens of abusive priests. Rigali said that had nothing to do with him stepping down.

The 2011 grand jury report resulted in criminal charges against **4 priests**, a **parochial school teacher** and **Msgr. William Lynn**. The grand jury alleged that as many as 37 priests remained in ministry in Pennsylvania despite credible allegations of abuse. Rigali at first challenged that claim, but 29 men were later put on administrative leave. *Source: CNN*, 7-19-11

**Rev. Michael O'Leary** was removed as pastor of St. Michael the Archangel parish, Scranton, **PA**, during a probe of allegations he gave alcohol to an underage young adult and a minor. O'Leary is a member of the Priestly Fraternity of

### **Creep of the Month**



Fr. Edmund Boyle, a pedophile priest who died in 1995 at age 78, left countless victims, male and female, in his wake, going back to the 1950s. Boyle's "problem" and "lapses" are well-documented in civil and criminal court proceedings and correspondence between church officials in the Archdiocese of Seattle and Catholic dioceses in Salt Lake City and Reno, NV. The church has settled with several plaintiffs.

In June, a state appeals court in Seattle overturned a lower court and ruled that a woman's suit against the archdiocese can proceed. "M.H." alleges that in about 1960, when she was 5, Boyle was molesting 3 of her brothers and carrying on romantically with her mother.

Boyle arranged a picnic, M.H. alleges, and invited 2 men and a woman to come along. One of the men asked M.H.'s mother if he could drive M.H., and Boyle allegedly said that was a good idea. But on the way, M.H., alleges, the man took her to an apartment and raped her on the kitchen table. She told her mother that she could see the spires of the cathedral while being raped, the suit says

The appeals court ruled the suit could go forward even though the unidentified alleged assailant was not under the control of the archdiocese. The appellant's brief says: "Father Boyle's preference for boys spared M.H. Boyle's direct sexual acts, but she could not escape his psychological manipulation nor his decision to orchestrate her abuse in concert with fellow pedophiles. This was, and should have been, foreseeable."

The court ruling said that "The alleged facts also show that Father Boyle knew the unidentified man planned to sexually abuse M.H. and was instrumental in arranging the opportunity for the man to do so."

The plaintiff alleges her mother told her to tell Boyle but when she did, he only prayed with her and told her to keep quiet. Source: Post-Intelligencer, 6-6-11

St. Peter, which celebrates the traditional Latin Mass. *Source: Times Leader, 7-19-11* 

**Rev. Paul Brooks** resigned after 25 years as pastor of the 5,000-member First Baptist Church, Raytown, **MO**, "after concerns surfaced about his activities that may have run afoul of the church's moral guidelines," said a church statement.

**Pat Windham**, a female Christian education leader at the church also resigned. The statement said "Brooks and the staff member each admitted the activity and both resigned."

Brooks is a married father of 3 three adult children. Windham is also married. In 2006, a judge dismissed a lawsuit against Brooks' son, Mark Lewis Brooks, who was accused of sexually assaulting a former church intern in 2004. Source: WDAF News, 7-15-11

**Fr. William Vatterott**, Ballwin, **MO**, was put on leave from St. Cecilia Catholic Church by the Archdiocese of St. Louis due to allegations of "inappropriate electronic exchanges and other questionable behavior with teenagers."

Police Sgt. Jim Heldmann said allegations are being looked at. "They're based on complaints that were made, but we're not even sure that a crime has been committed." Source: Ballwin-Ellisville Patch, 7-1-11

#### Other

William Guthrie, 66, Wolsey, SD: Guthrie, a former Presbyterian pastor sentenced to life for murdering his wife in 1999, died in the state penitentiary. Cause of death wasn't released.

Guthrie was accused of putting 10 to 20 Temazepan sleeping pills in Sharon Guthrie's chocolate milk. She drowned in their bathtub and he called 9-1-1. One of their 3 daughters was due to get married in her mother's wedding gown in a month. Police believed the pastor was having an affair with a Nebraska woman. Source: AP, 7-17-11

The Detroit chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests has sent a letter of complaint to the **Archdiocese of Detroit** about using **Rev. Roger Knapp**, 59, former pastor of St. Victor Catholic Church in Gibraltar, as a parish substitute.

Knapp pleaded no contest to disorderly conduct in 2009 after a plea bargain that dropped charges of lewdness and indecent exposure. A waitress at Amigo's Restaurant alleged he made comments with sexual overtones and fondled his private parts every time she walked by. Knapp claimed he'd spilled salsa on himself and was merely cleaning it off. He was fined \$595, ordered to perform 7 days' community service and get sex offender treatment. He was later removed from St. Victor. Source: Detroit Free Press, 6-14-11

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

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### **Letterbox**

### Members appreciate Foundation's work

I am enclosing a check for \$5,000 for an Afterlife Membership. I am fast approaching my 80s, and I have experienced some rather serious health problems lately. I am becoming increasingly concerned that I will not have anything interesting to read when I get to heaven.

Name withheld by request California

My wife donated my FFRF Lifetime Membership awhile back. Now I'm sending you this check for her own Lifetime Membership from me. We really appreciate your values and goals and the good work that you do, particularly your legal work.

Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor are some of our favorite speakers, writers and thinkers on issues of religion in government and on basic reality and humanity. Your legal staff is outstanding. We appreciate every one of y'all at FFRF.

Larkin Crumbley Georgia

We've had enough rudeness, disrespect, bullying and tyranny from ignorant theocrats. It is pervasive in government-operated senior centers. FFRF is fighting back.

Freethought Today tells it as it is. The enclosed \$1,000 check is for my Lifetime Membership.

Lee Leimberg Maryland

I am celebrating the Fourth of July by writing to thank you, everyone at FFRF, for all you do to protect our nation from theocracy.

I especially liked the Freethought of the Day for July 4 about the Declaration of Independence: "[G]overnments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed" is definitely anti-biblical. So is our Constitution.

So keep up the good anti-biblical work so we have reason to celebrate the Fourth of July in the future.

Carolyn S. Holland

Texas

We keep informed of the activities of all the secular, skeptic, nonbeliever organizations, and we have to say that you are the ones doing the job best of all. Addressing the major issue of Day of Prayer proclamations, getting bill-boards displayed, helping youth, having a coming-out campaign and, best of all, addressing very local issues such as school prayers, convinced us that you have the correct vision for us atheists. Thank you for giving us a voice.

Bob and Jo Chanaud Arizona

#### Courts flush First Amendment freedoms

I was disappointed to learn that FFRF's suit to enjoin Texas Gov. Perry's National Day of Christian Prayer, like Obama's before it, was dismissed for lack of legal standing.

It is apparent to me that, by the reasoning of Judge Miller's opinion, Congress could pass a law establishing the National Evangelical Christian Church of the United States of America, and

since no one could claim any direct injury from it (aside from feelings of exclusion), then no one has standing to complain about it on First Amendment Establishment Clause grounds.

The courts have found an easy way to flush the Establisment Clause down the national toilet.

Tim Taylor Thailand

### This sacrifice just isn't worth it

As one does when having one's hair cut, I was chatting with my hairdresser. She was raised in a Soviet country when religion was against the law, so I figured she would be "supernatural free." We got on the subject of suicide bombers eager to die for the promise of 75 or whatever number virgins they're promised in the afterlife.

"I can't believe how gullible they are," she said, and I agreed. But then she added, "Don't they realize what good are all those virgins once they've blown up their penises?"

It reminds me of the Woody Allen story about the family whose uncle believed he was a chicken. They didn't take him to a psychiatrist because they needed the eggs.

Even where there is no organized religion, there's still plenty of residual irrationality.

Joan Reisman New York

### Religionists ask for respect but offer none

Religionists are quick to accuse us atheists of not showing any respect for their beliefs and religions. But when we ask them to respect our views on reproductive choice or stem cell research, they turn around and call us murderers.

How on earth can we respect the views of people who label us murderers for our views on vital issues of freedom and health, which we hold to be highly ethical?

Eric A. Stone New York

### Atheist, Latina and a Jew walk into senior housing

Your letters and articles and such designations as "foxhole atheists" are comforting in their boldness. Perhaps it's easier here because Vermont is a state that allows more diverse opinions.

I live in senior housing. A lot of people hang Christmas-type decorations, starting with candy canes and snowmen. I complained and was told I was allowed my own views and that egregious displays (crèches and such) would not be allowed. You can guess what's happened since, replete with crèches, images of angels, Jesus and Mary and so on, and nothing was done. (I expect to ultimately see a full-size crucifixion, blood dripping, etc.)

I began putting out counterviews, including FFRF's page of quotes. I haven't been attacked, and people accept my arguments. Some like to discuss it, and some religious people consider me a nonreligious ethical person.

A friend of mine here, a former Catholic, has good-naturedly grouped me with a Latina and observant Jews as the minority! It's teasing but not demeaning.

Fine, but I bring up my nonbeliefs (Richard Dawkins: ¡Salud!) and without haranguing people, as I feel all the cute Christmas stuff does. My apartment door is covered with appropriate cartoons and quotes — political and anti-racist, too.

Keep fighting back!

Jerry Weinberg

Vermont

#### Pansy card perfect on refrigerator

How delightful it is, when making a donation, to receive a thank-you note instead of a request for more money.

Thanks for the gorgeous pansy card. It will be added to my vast library of refrigerator art because, long before the founding of FFRF, it was my family's flower. It was the favorite flower of my maternal grandmother, who was the family saint — a humanistic saint, not a religious one.

Kathleen Yagelo Michigan

### FFRF stems religious tide in Oregon city

Thank you so much for the help that you gave when I sent the alarm over a state/church violation [nativity scene at City Hall] in Prineville, Ore. It really rocked this rural cowboy Christian town of 10,000.

The town was embroiled in all of the typical discussion that I have read about in your paper and on your website. It was the pressure from FFRF and the ACLU that helped the City Council decide in May to make the right decision and get out of the religion business.

We are donating \$200 to help support your further efforts to stem the religious tide in the U.S. Thank you again. I know you will keep up the good fight.

Name withheld by request Oregon

### Thanks for fighting Texas' 'Pastor' Perry

Thank you for filing suit to end the offensive prayer service being promoted by Texas Governor Rick Perry. You have my support!

Daniel Santos Texas

Thank you for taking on Rick Perry and his crossing the line dividing church and state. I am not a Christian,

and I take *great* issue with his holding a Christians-only prayer conference. *And* I agree with you that we must use our heads, not fall to our knees in prayer, to solve our very substantial problems.

Again, thank you, thank you!

Sharon Miller California

### Barbara Walker column strikes a chord

Thanks for Barbara G. Walker's "Religion as the root of sexism" in the June/July issue. It was very salient and on point about one of the most egregious abominations of the "Big 3."

I can't help but wonder how people like Michelle Bachmann, as bible-believing Christians, justify running for political office. The basic tenets of her religion would seem to disallow such abominable behavior from an inferior gender, not to mention the very specific admonitions against lowly women even speaking in church. Yet she (and so many others) manage to skip over the very basic truth according to their religion, but can point to, and subscribe wholeheartedly to, half a dozen "clobber verses" to bash over the heads of gays and lesbians.

I was also amused when I thought about woman's original sin of disobedient apple-eating (good one, Ms. Walker!), "[w]ith which all generations were infected simply by the passage of every child through a female body." Could we have stumbled on a cure for original sin?

I don't think we're there yet, but if science can perfect bringing a baby to term without going through a female body, would not that baby be sin-free?

Greg Wert

Delaware

The erudite Barbara G. Walker [June/July11] writes that early Christians called Jews "Christ killers." I'd like to clarify that statement. It wasn't only the early Christians who *often* blamed the Jews for Jesus' death. Christians for two millennia *always* blamed the Jews for the death of their god. It took until the late 20th century for churches to officially erase the blame.

I'm thankful that hatred of Jews is no longer sanctioned. I'll be even more thankful when organized religion's poisonous mix of hatred, arrogance and ignorance is no longer tolerated anywhere in the world.

Regarding another June/July story, "FFRF calls for Rapture probe," anyone who believes that a baby was born to a virgin, walked on water when he grew



#### Foxhole pirate

Army Sgt. Justin Griffith's "atheist/FSM" dog tags are now part of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster's website and Wikipedia page. Justin writes from Fort Bragg, N.C., that he thinks the recent interest in his dog tags stems from the story going viral of the Austrian atheist wearing an FSM colander on his head in his driver's license photo. For Justin's funny tale of how his drill sergeant dealt with his Pastafarianism, go to <code>rockbeyondbelief.com</code>. [Editor's note: We "PhotoShopped" the Social Security number from the dog tags.]

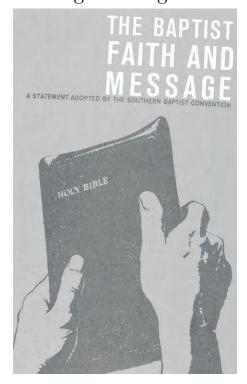
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up and was resurrected after he died can be led to believe anything. Such people are easy prey for scam artists.

I don't believe that we should worry about protecting fools from knaves, especially when those dimwits should have known better.

**David Quintero** California

#### Still waiting for 'intelligent design' odds



On page 19 of "The Baptist Faith and Message," a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, is Belief No. 17 on Religious Liberty, which states, "Church and state should be separate," and "A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal."

According to that, Southern Baptists should be "partnering" with FFRF and other groups to keep religion out of government and government out of religion!

I got the booklet at a Baptist church where I was attending a series of four weekly meetings promoting "intelligent design." They were conducted by a state of Georgia forensic scientist, who concluded the series with a formula claiming that the odds of the coming together of the necessary conditions to randomly produce the universe were xzillion to the 15th power.

When he finished, I loudly asked, "What are the odds that the Earth was created by a supernatural being?" He and the preacher mumbled together a moment, and I was asked if I was an atheist, to which I replied, "Yes." (I wish I'd been quick enough to ask what difference that made.)

He said that he would determine the odds and get in touch. I'm still waiting. I fantasize that in the following days they had a pest control company fumigate the whole church.

As usual, it was a delight to make the annual pilgrimage to Lake Hypatia for the July 4 weekend and to enjoy being with friends of like persuasion.

**Jack McKinney** Georgia

#### Yes, pastor, radio's a real miracle!

[Sonya Newlyn shares her letter to Cornerstone Community Church Pastor Mike Barres in Andrews, N.C.]

Dear Pastor Barres: I read in Freethought Today, the newspaper for members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, that The Andrews Journal quoted you as saying, "Lord, I thank you for the miracle of prayer. It makes me think of the radio. I don't know how it works, but I know that it works."

How sad that you have failed to access the vast resources of knowledge available on the Internet to find out how a radio works!

Let me assure you that many people know how a radio works. You can learn how it does, too! The FCC even believes that the workings of a radio are simple enough for kids to understand. Here's a direct link to the FCC's explanation tailored specifically for children.

As for prayer, I have to agree with FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor that "nothing fails like prayer." Check out this New York Times report [linked] on a 10-year study of prayer for heart disease patients. [It showed "no differences between those patients who were prayed for and those who were not."] Talk about a waste of money!

Sonya Newlyn California

#### We stand together to survive madness

Thank you, FFRF, for being there and for your words of sanity. I'm feeling really nervous watching a huge private, i.e., religious school being built within a mile of my neighborhood. Stealing funding from public schools just adds to the problems here, never mind the brainwashing. There are already 14 churches and synagogues within five miles of me, for which I and others have to pay their share of property taxes! How in the world is that separation of state and church?

A large "Family Christian Bookstore" just opened nearby, replacing a Barnes & Noble, a very bad trade. Florida's governor has attacked abortion rights statewide already, adding layers of cost and inconvenience onto an already costly and unpleasant option.

We must stand together, help each other to survive the madness and teach others when given a chance. Thank you and big hugs.

PJ Stentz Florida

#### Chapman's 'Ledge' well worth seeing

I saw the pro-atheist film "The Ledge" in Manhattan recently. Before I saw it, I read a negative review by New York Times critic Stephen Holden, who called it "preposterous" and claimed deep offense due to its (accurate) depiction of the bigoted Christian fundamentalist character in the film. It also got very lukewarm reviews in the New York Post and New York Daily News.

I found the film intelligent and suspenseful. The plot unfolds in flashbacks as an atheist suicide jumper on a ledge explains his situation to a sympathetic detective who has just had a faith-testing jolt in his life. Everything comes dramatically together at the

I found the performances, which were panned by the critcs, to be quite good overall, especially by the actors who played the detective and the fundamentalist. Liv Tyler, ridiculed as "cow-eyed" by Holden, gave a very sensitive performance as a young woman victimized by her rigid and sexist evangelical husband. The atheist character was not as strong, but his performance was respectable.

The atheist and rationalist point of view gets across very effectively in a number of scenes, and religion gets its fair share of whacks, which probably accounts for some critics' negative reviews. It's still unacceptable in this

country to praise atheism and lambast "faith." Recall that Bill Maher's hilarious flick "Religulous" was not even nominated by the so-called liberal Academy Awards for Best Documentary. "Agora," the film about Hypatia, the freethinking 5th century philosopher murdered by Christians, won numerous awards in Europe but had a limited release in the U.S.

Religion is still a sacred cow in America. "The Ledge," directed by Matthew Chapman, a direct descendant of Charles Darwin, won't last long in theaters. See it while you can!

**Dennis Middlebrooks** 

**New York** 

#### Good children's book for freethinkers

In looking for a book to welcome the new daughter of freethinking scientist friends, I came across this wonderful little book by Debra Frasier, On the Day You Were Born. I don't remember it from when my kids were growing up. I can recommend it as a lovely book for any very young child but especially for freethinking families.

It's not an atheist book per se, but the simple story presents a lovely, positive view of the natural world free from any religious overtones. Noah's ark is nowhere in sight!

#### **Marcia Hischier** California

[Editor's note: The author's website says about the book, published in 1991 and recommended for ages 4-8, "The lyric text welcomes each child to the every day miracles of planet Earth — the sun, moon, North Star, wind, rain, tides and the circle of people awaiting each child." It was Frasier's first book and came about due to a difficult pregnancy with her only child: "Early in the pregnancy, when things were at their darkest, I asked a nurse at the hospital to bring me some paper so I could write down all the things on our Earth that would welcome my daughter, if she would just get here."]

#### Outside the pearly gates meet Joe, George

Let's assume for the sake of argument that there really is heaven and hell. One cannot help but feel sorry for the so-called born-again Christians. Not only do they deprive themselves of a variety of life's pleasures, but once they reside past the pearly gates, will find themselves in the company of certain obese loudmouth preachers known to suffer from food addiction, linked to flatulence and air pollution.

As for me, I choose to hang out with the likes of George Carlin, which seems like a hell of a lot more fun.

Joe Bahlke California

#### Billboard ads show diversity of atheists

Fantastic! I saw the nice faces of "Out of the Closet" atheists on the billboard ads. It's a great idea to portray them in a positive way. It shows to all those religious people that atheists are just normal folks, leading normal lives and coming from many walks of life.

Congratulations for coming up with this idea!

**Bob Srinivasan** Wisconsin

#### Alas, there's no savior in sight!

All we hear lately are stories of old Straight from the bible or so we are told

How Christ will return and rapture his own Then destroy the whole world without even a groan. Well my question is simple Who'll take the blame When Sunday arrives and all is the same? No bugle was heard, no Savior in sight No fire and brimstone, gonna be a long night. When dawn breaks on Sunday, will there be a song? Will the churches still open like nothing is wrong?

is a nice cozy bed. Jim Pennington **South Carolina** 

Just take some advice

It needs to be said

The best place on Sundays

#### Secular Norway hit by religious terror

The right-wing media seems to be in denial about the alleged Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik's Christian fundamentalism. There's no denying that he was on a crusade, with deep hatred for other religions and for members of the government and Labor Party who support equality for and integration of immigrants, across religious and ethnic lines.

I was born and raised in Norway. If Breivik had been a nonbelieving secularist like most Norwegians, it's very unlikely that he would have harbored enough hate to commit the horrible acts he's confessed to, including killing 77 people. It's painful for Norwegians to accept that one of their own was responsible for such atrocities in a tranquil country with low crime.

The horrible tragedy reminds me what physicist and Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg said: "With or without religion, good people will do good things and bad people bad things. But for good people to do bad things, requires religion."

Not one survivor interviewed referred to being saved by or thanking God for their good fortune of being alive, while their friends were killed right in front of their eyes. No one said they had prayed or asked for divine assistance. Instead, the young people focused on what they had to do to increase the chance of surviving, or what they could do to help others around.

Likely, many more would have been killed if they had given up and resorted to praying, instead of doing what they did to help themselves and others. Some saved themselves by playing dead. If anything, praying would probably have led to more deaths.

It was uplifting to hear officials like Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, Oslo Mayor Fabian Stang and others end their speeches without a single reference to "God." What a relief to see how well a secular society works, even in the wake of enormous tragedy.

Jorg Aadahl California



A challenge to believers." Hardback, 342pp., photos. Member price: \$20.00 Non-member price: \$25.00

FFRF, PO Box 750, Madison WI 53701 ffrf.org/shop



### They Said What?

I'm an atheist, and in Zanesville, Ohio, in 2008, you asserted that no organization receiving taxpayer funds would be able to discriminate in hiring or firing based on a person's religion. You have not rescinded this executive order that permits this type of discrimination. In a time of economic hardship when it's difficult for a person to get a job based on her skills, what would you say to a woman who has been denied employment because of her religion or lack of religious beliefs by a taxpayer-funded organization.

Amanda Knief's question to President Obama at a town hall in College Park, Md.

CNN, 7-22-11

Well, this is a very difficult issue. It's very straightforward that people shouldn't be discriminated against for race, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation. What is happened is that there has been a carve-out dating back to President Clinton's presidency for religious organizations in their hiring for particular purposes, and this is always a tricky part of the First Amendment. Now, I think that the balance we've tried to strike is to say that if you are offering — if you have set up a nonprofit that is disassociated from your core religious functions and is out there in the public doing all kinds of work, then you have to abide generally with the nondiscrimination hiring practices. If on the other hand, it is closer to your core functions as a synagogue or mosque or a church, then there may more leeway to hire somebody that is a believer of that particular religious faith.

President Obama's answer to Amanda Knief

CNN, 7-22-11

I saw Calvary in the midst of all the wreckage, the disaster. It was a sign . . . that God didn't desert us.

Frank Silecchia, commenting on a cross-shaped steel beam he found in the rubble of the World Trade Center and is being moved to the National September 11 Memorial Museum NBC New York, 7-24-11

There is really no such a thing as an atheist or an agnostic. If you think of yourself as such, you are self-deceived. Deep down you know that God exists. We all do.

Columnist Vasko Kohlmayer, "Atheist or agnostic: We all know God"

The Washington Times, 7-25-11

By offering "read meat" about [Pastor Dean] and Congresswoman Michele

Bachmann — however malicious, misleading and false — to its leftist, secular atheist and/or pro-"gay rights" audience, it is able to further this objective.

Pastor Bradlee Dean's allegation in a \$50 million defamation lawsuit agains Rachel Maddow, MSNBC and the Minnesota Independent

Talking Points Memo, 7-28-11

We're not for legalizing marijuana, even if it's for medical reasons, because marijuana is very addictive. We believe that healing comes through God and through holistic means, rather than through marijuana.

Rev. Sarah Barbour, New Birth Family Life Worship Center pastor and founder of Yes MAMM (Mothers Against Meth and Marijuana)

Indianapolis Star, 7-28-11

I, the Lord God in heaven, call upon the court to now cease this prosecution against my pure and holy way coming against my church. Let it stop now. I am the Lord God over all that speaketh. I will wrest your power from you. I shall judge you. I shall let all peoples know of your unjust ways. I shall send a scourge upon the counties of prosecutorial zeal to be humbled by sickness and death.

Mormon polygamist leader Warren Jeffs' statement at his Texas trial where he was convicted of assault for raping a 12-year-old girl and impregnated a 15-year-old, both of whom he calls his "celestial wives"

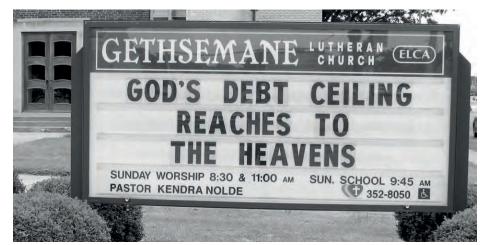
 $Salt\ Lake\ Tribune,\ 7\text{-}29\text{-}11$ 

Keep them from the pit of disunity and discord. And empower them to build bridges of cooperation. Give them the courage and humility to do what is right, knowing that you are the only constituent they absolutely must please.

U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black's prayer asking for divine help to raise the debt ceiling

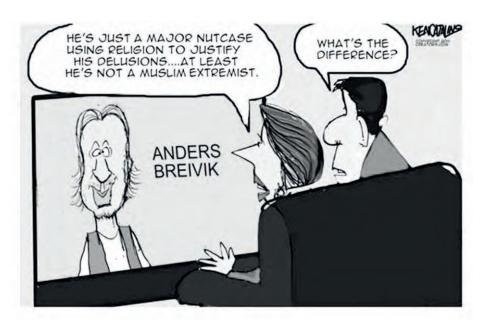
The Washington Post, 7-31-11

The religious factions that are growing throughout our land are not using their religious clout with wisdom. They are trying to force government leaders into following their position 100 percent. If you disagree with these religious groups on a particular moral issue, they complain, they threaten you with a loss of money or votes or both. I'm frankly sick and tired of the political preachers across this country telling me as a citizen that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe in A, B, C, and D. Just who do they think they are?



#### 'Father, let this cup pass from me.'

Gus Stevenson writes from Missouri about this sign in St. Louis: "Time to refinance? Or maybe increase revenues at the collection plate?"



The late Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., speaking in 1981 and quoted in Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* 

The Washington Post, 7-13-11

This article makes a mistake that I've seen becoming more and more common recently. It assumes that atheism is something special, odd or unique. It is voiced in a manner that indicates that atheists are the abnormal ones, rather than religious folk. Demographically, we're a minority, but religion isn't something a person is born with, everyone is birthed as an atheist. Why does there have to be something wrong with us?

John K., commenting on a column about FFRF's "Out of the Closet" billboards in which the author says he doesn't need to know if someone's an

madmikesamerica.com, 6-8-11

I glanced at it, and it looks like Jesus. I thought, "You can't spray Jesus with Roundup."

Kent Hardison, on "Kudzu Jesus" (actually trumpet vine) growing on a utility pole near Kinston, N.C.

Associated Press, 6-30-11

If you really care about a rape victim, you would want to protect her from the abortion, and not the baby. A baby is not the worst thing that could ever happen to a rape victim — an abortion is

Press release on the "Conceived in Rape" tour to support a fetal personhood amendment in Mississippi personhoodusa.com, 6-2-11

Promised Land Paintball is America's best Christian paintball park!

Website promo for business in Trevor, Wis.

promisedland.com, 7-24-11

We cannot elevate nature above people. That's against the bible and the Bill of Rights.

Edna Mattos, Citrus County [Fla.] Tea Party Patriots, opposing protections for manatees

St. Petersburg Times, 7-13-11

The Internet has given atheists, agnostics, skeptics, the people who like to destroy everything that you and I believe, the almost equal access to your kids as your youth pastor and you have.

Josh McDowell, Campus Crusade for Christ, "Internet the greatest threat to Christians"

 $The\ Christian\ Post,\ 7\text{-}16\text{-}11$ 

Dear Friends, I just launched News.va. Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ! With my prayers and blessings, Benedictus XVI.

The pope's first message on Twitter, entering urban folklore as "Tweet Jesus"

cnet.com, 6-29-11

#### How it came to pass that Beer beats Jesus

The "Top Ten Reasons Why Beer Is Better than Jesus" is a freethinker's golden oldie, but from whence did it stem? With help from "teh Google," we found Paul D. Jones credited.

In a 1999 letter to Positive Atheism magazine, which had printed "Beer vs. Jesus," Jones wrote about the list's genesis. The magazine had said "source unknown."

drinking Beer.

9. Beer do have sex.

8. Beer has war.

But, Jones wrote, "unknown would be myself. Rather, I had the idea, and about half of the reasons are from my original list on a [bulletin board] called EvilAntiForum at Texas A&M, sometime in '90 or '91. I had just seen a T-shirt with the 'Top Ten Reasons Why Jesus Is Better Than Beer' list [No. 4: If you go around saying "Beer loves you," people will think you're an idiot, an alcoholic or both"], so I rebutted. After some discussion and revision, the list was made into a T-shirt, which had two printing runs.

"Humorously, the first printer we picked out of the phone book had religious tees all over the walls when we went there. We found another."

Another website credits Steve Ber-

ry of Texas A&M's agnostic and atheist student group.

The list:

- **10.** No one will kill you for not drinking Beer.
- **9.** Beer doesn't tell you how to have sex.
- **8.** Beer has never caused a major war.
- **7.** They don't force Beer on minors who can't think for themselves.
- **6.** When you have a Beer, you don't knock on people's doors trying to give it away.
- **5.** Nobody's ever been burned at the stake, hanged or tortured over his brand of Beer.
- **4.** You don't have to wait 2000+ years for a second Beer.
- **3.** There are laws saying Beer labels can't lie to you.
- **2.** You can prove you have a Beer.
- 1. If you've devoted your life to Beer, there are groups to help you stop.

[Hat tip to Elaine Hampton of beautiful downtown Burbank.]

### How Christians drove me to atheism



By Gene Osegovic

ith this article, I publicly declare my atheism. For 40 years, I've had a series of negative emotional experiences while interacting with Christians of various denominations. The accumulation of those experiences ultimately drove me to question the intellectual underpinnings of religion and finally become an atheist.

My parents enrolled me in the mid-1960s in St. Bernard's Catholic School in Levittown, N.Y., when I was 6 or 7. One day, our teacher, a nun, told us to put our books down, but I was engrossed in the material and didn't hear her. *Slap!* With lightning quickness for such an antediluvian individual, she gave me a karate chop to my Adam's apple. I still remember feeling pain, shame, fear and anger at the nun and the school. I complained and my parents quickly removed me from the school.

When I became a teen, my parents placed me in Temple Heights Christian School, a Baptist school in Tampa, Fla. One elderly female teacher told us that Catholics, which I still was, worshiped idols and were all hellbound. I challenged her and told her that she was a Baptist because she and her parents grew up in the southern United States and adopted the religion common to that area. Would it not be silly and unfair, I asked, for God to condemn an entire group of people because they grew up where the wrong religion was dominant? I did not convince her.

In my mid-teens, I attended New Orleans Baptist School in Tampa, where I actually had a good time. No nuns, and the students — mostly Cubans — accepted me, a white kid, into their group. They taught me another lesson about religion.

The group's short-tempered leader got into a fight one day. After injuring another student, he made the sign of the Christian cross and acted as if nothing had happened. I realized this was an example of "cheap grace." You can beat someone up, but if you ask, God will forgive you for your sins. Where is the incentive to stop negative behavior

when your God keeps forgiving you?

As I left my teen years, went to college and started working, I did not reject religion outright, but I stopped going to church and religion became unimportant. If asked to declare my religion, I still said "Catholic," but the word had become just a label.

Fast-forward to 2001. I was still nonreligious but had not made the mental jump to atheism. Then the administration of George W. Bush came along.

The Religious Right heavily supported Bush during his two runs for president and provided the base of support for most of his policies. Right away I could see the huge gulf between Bush's "compassionate conservatism" and his policies. He oversaw cuts to programs needed by the poor or otherwise disadvantaged, while increasing funding for the U.S. military, already the mightiest assemblage of armed personnel the world had ever seen.

How could this be? How could an overtly religious man support policies that seemed to be the antithesis of major tenets of his religion, such as promoting peace and helping those in need?

I started reading atheist-oriented books. When Freethought Radio debuted in 2007, I started listening to the podcasts on my iPod every week. In 2009, I realized I had become an atheist and attended the FFRF convention in Seattle.

Have I come out as an atheist? Yes and no. I wear hoodies imprinted with pictures and slogans that poke fun at religion. On one hoodie, "Teach the

Controversy" appears below a farmer guiding a plow pulled by a triceratops. Another "Teach the Controversy" hoodie depicts the Ptolemaic model of the solar system. A clock in my basement displays the phrase "God Bless Atheism!" The license plate on my car says NODOGMA.

I wear a Richard Dawkins' "scarlet A" necklace, but I keep the "A" covered with a T-shirt in public. I neither speak about, nor display evidence of, my atheism at my workplace, except with one or two co-workers who are also atheists.

This is for two reasons: First, I do not believe in sharing religious or nonreligious beliefs with a captive audience, namely my co-workers. Second, my company and many of my co-workers are conservative.

Though I do not believe my job would be placed in jeopardy by coming out as an atheist, it certainly would not build much rapport at work, to say nothing of advancing my career.

FFRF member Gene Osegovic loves the mountains and natural beauty of his adopted state of Colorado, where he's a project manager. His interests include reading, computing technology, '70s and '80s music, bowling, chess, tennis, skiing, photography and drinking red wine. He visited Australia earlier this year and plans to take a panoramic tour of Western Europe this fall.

His favorite atheist quote (by Anne Nicol Gaylor): "Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

### They Said What?

I don't know of anybody that's not made a mistake, and except for perhaps one, and for that we murdered him. You know, he was faultless and we murdered him for it. That's not politically correct, but I happen to believe in God.

Comment from the bench by Circuit Judge Jack Singbush, charged with misconduct by the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission

Ocala Star-Banner, 5-11-11

Senator Ensign told Ms. Hampton that he wanted to marry her while they attended the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington.

Special counsel's report to the Senate Select Committee on Ethics investigating former Nevada Sen. John Ensign's extramarital affair with his aide's wife *ethics.senate.gov*, 5-10-11

It's up to each individual community. I think God is the answer. Washington or Nashville is not the answer. God is the answer.

Sheriff Mike Cross, at the Scott County [Tenn.] Prayer For Meth Rally at the courthouse

WBIR News, 4-8-11

I think if teachers are going to teach evolution they should send home a permission slip asking parents if their child can participate in that chapter, unit, etc. They send home permission slips for controversial movies why not subjects? I personally am a Christian and do not believe in evolution. But I

wouldn't be against my children hearing the views and opinions of others. Who knows maybe it will grab their interest enough that they make it their lives work to disprove the theory.

Valerie [no last name], commenting on Tennessee House passage of a "critical thinking" bill that lets teachers discuss creationism and intelligent design along with evolution

Knoxville News, 4-7-11

Since prior to your report the diocese was not aware of any problems the priest may have had, it was determined that the diocese cannot be responsible for the actions of a priest which are performed for his own ends and which are condemned rather than approved by the Church.

1994 letter to Todd Frey from Rev. Paul Helwig, Diocese of Harrisburg secretary for clergy and religious life, denying financial compensation after removing the priest who molested him as a boy

Harrisburg Patriot-News, 4-11-11

But as we look around us, we can see that things have gone terribly wrong with God's design. When man disobeyed God, the connection between God and man was broken, the relationship between husband and wife was affected and healthy masculinity and femininity became damaged and confused.

Jeff Johnston, gender and homosexuality analyst, Focus on the Family

DayofDialogue.com, 4-15-11



All I was thinking was that I had to detonate myself near as many people as possible. When I decided it was the right time, it was a moment of happiness for me. I thought that there would be a little bit of pain, but then I would be in heaven.

Umar Fidai, 14, a suicide bomber who survived the explosions he and another teen set off, killing 50 people in a Sufi shrine in Pakistan

BBC News, 4-18-11

Just because you're offended doesn't mean you have the right.

Pamela Dahl, Tri-County Tea Party president, supporting Lady Lake [Fla.] Commissioner Ruth Kussard's statement that atheists "could come back after the prayer" opening commission meetings

Orlando Sentinel, 4-19-11

There's something about the resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ that puts everything else into perspective.

President Obama, speaking at his Easter prayer breakfast in the East Room of the White House

USA Today, 4-19-11

I think, like all liberals, he's an atheist. Ann Coulter, denying that Obama is a Christian or a Muslim

Fox Business Channel, 4-27-11

I love the fact that it is Christian-based. They are closed on Sunday. You know the beginning of every week, come the following week, you can be home to see your family.

Libby Knupp, a West Virginia resident attending her 70th grand opening since 2007 of a Chick-fil-A restaurant, this one in Orangeburg, S.C.

The Times and Democrat, 4-21-11

#### In the News

#### All systems go for **Rock Beyond Belief**

Sgt. Justin Griffith, a persistent foxhole atheist and FFRF member stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., says a festival called Rock Beyond Belief is scheduled for March 31 at the Army base. Col. Stephen Sicinski, base commander, reversed an earlier decision not to allow the event, which Griffith spearheaded in reaction to a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association event called Rock the Fort.

"This just might be *the* turning point in the foxhole atheist community's struggle for acceptance, tolerance and respect," Griffith said. "It's an amazing time to be a nonbeliever in the U.S. military on the cusp of a major breakthrough. . . . We're extremely grateful to [Col. Sicinski] for this opportunity."

The public is invited, free of charge. Richard Dawkins is the scheduled keynote speaker. FFRF Co-President Dan Barker is also slated to speak.

Weather permitting, Fort Bragg's Golden Knights parachute team may perform. "I can't say much more at this point, but some atheists may just be falling out of the freaking sky (with parachutes)," Griffith said at rockbeyondbelief.com.

Fort spokesman Benjamin Abel told The New York Times that use of the parade field was approved because Rock Beyond Belief came up with enough money for a stage, lighting, sound system and other expenses. About \$30,000 was needed. The Army will provide electricity, water and security but no direct financial assistance.

#### School bans Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five

The School Board in Republic, Mo., voted 4-0 on July 25 to ban Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five and Sarah Ockler's Twenty Boy Summer due to one man's complaint. Wesley Scroggins "challenged the use of the books and lesson plans in Republic schools, arguing they teach principles contrary to the bible," reported the Springfield News-Leader. A reporter, the board members and two administrators were the only people at the meeting.

In response, in a post titled on its website "Stop the madness," the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library in Indianapolis offered a free copy of Slaughterhouse-Five to district high school students. An anonymous donor made 150 copies available.

#### Atheist fired by **YMCA** files suit

A Fountain Hill, Pa., man claims the Family YMCA of Easton, Phillipsburg and Vicinity fired him because he is an atheist and complained about religious discrimination, in a lawsuit reported July 29 by the Harrisburg Times-Express.

Edward Massey, who was hired in 2008, worked at the YMCA as a lead teacher. In July 2010, when a child asked Massey about his religious beliefs, Massey replied he didn't believe in God and explained what atheism means.

The same day, management allegedly told Massey that the YMCA was a Christian group and part of his job was to "spread Christian values." He was suspended for two days and was later

#### **Jury finds Mormon** sect leader guilty

The leader of the 10,000-member Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Warren Jeffs, 55, was found guilty Aug. 4 in Texas of aggravated sexual assaults of girls ages 12 and 14 whom he took as child brides. The Salt Lake Tribune said Jeff has 78 wives, 24 of them under age 17. He fathered a child with the 14-year-old victim when she was 15.

The jury heard audio recordings of Jeffs having sex with the girls: "Take your clothes off. Do it right now. Each one who touches me and assists each other will have my holy gift. Just don't think about the pain. You're going to

"You have to know how to be sexually excited and to help each other . . . and you have to be ready for the time I need your comfort."

#### Students confess sins, then have to eat them

A British mother pulled her 7-yearold son out of school after he was convinced to "repent his sins" on paper and then to chew and swallow the ricepaper apology.

Celia Mullen said the incident occurred during a visit by New Life Baptist Church members to her son's class at Ainderby Steeple primary school, which is run by the Church of England.

The Sunday Mirror reported July 24 that Mullen's son, Luis, came home confused and started to cry while recounting what happened. "We had to eat a piece of paper with the word 'sorry' on it."

Mullen complained to head teacher Fiona Sharp, who worships at New Life, according to her Facebook posts. She said Sharp told her, "That is what

New Life's assistant pastor confirmed that the incident happened.

#### New 'Cru' runs away from Crusades

Campus Crusade for Christ, founded in 1951, is changing its name to Cru.

The goal, according to Christianity Today, is to ditch the problematic word "crusade" and the word "campus," seen by campus crusaders as passé.

The group's website denies trying to take Christ off campus: "Cru enables us to have discussions about Christ with people who might initially be turned off by a more overtly Christian name."

#### Pastor suspended for marrying lesbians

Rev. Amy DeLong, 44, a United Methodist pastor in Osceola, Wis., was suspended for 20 days July 1 for marrying a lesbian couple in 2009.

A church panel voted 13-0 that De-Long was guilty. She could have been barred from the ministry. She was also ordered to draft a document outlining ways to avert similar church trials. Hers lasted two days. If she declines,



she'll be suspended for a year. She was acquitted of being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual," a Methodist term that means gays can serve as clergy as long as they remain celibate.

DeLong told The Associated Press that she refused to discuss her celibacy. "It's an indecent question. Nobody should have to answer that when somebody's trying to do them harm. We don't measure the validity of a heterosexual couple's relationship based upon how they conduct themselves in their private moments."

#### **Ghana Bible Society** invades public schools

The Ghana Bible Society is aiming to distribute 1 million bibles to students in all public junior high schools by 2012, according to the Ghana News Agency in Accra. The group has already handed out more than 800,000 bibles to students since 2007.

Rev. Erasmus Odonkor, the group's general secretary, is collaborating with Joyful Way Inc. Odonkor said if Christians can catch the young ones through the bible, Ghana will be be poised for rapid socioeconomic development. Kafui Agormeda-Tetteh, GBS promotion and resource mobilization manager, urged everyone to be steadfast in their bible reading because it's the only weapon with which to fight the devil and transform people's lives.

#### Texas killer dies feeling blessed

July 20 in Huntsville, Texas, for kill- es" dropped 8 points to 38%. ing a store clerk near Dallas in 2001

in what he had called a "patriotic" act of retaliation for the 9/11 attacks. He admitted to at least three attacks in the weeks after 9/11, all on men he believed to be Muslims.

"The Lord Jesus Christ be with me," Stroman said before receiving a lethal drug injection, according to the Huntsville Item. "I'm still a proud American, Texas loud, Texas proud. God bless America, God bless everyone."

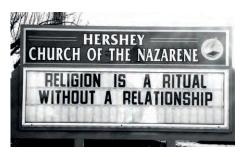
His last meal included chicken-fried steak with gravy, ham-and-cheese omelet with onions and tomatoes, bacon, fried potatoes, fried squash and okra, pork chops with eggs sunny-side up, Dr Pepper and a pint of vanilla Blue Bell ice cream.

#### Church attendance declines 9%

Since 1991, regular U.S. church attendance has dropped 9 percentage points to 40%, said George Barna of the Barna Group, a research group focusing on faith. Other shifts noted over the past 20 years:

- Church volunteerism at 19% is down 8%.
- In 1991, 24% of adults were unchurched. Now it's 37%.
- · Born-again Christians increased to 40% (a 5% growth).
- The percentage of adults who believe God is "the all-knowing, all-powerful and perfect Creator of the universe who still rules the world today" is down 7% to 67%. It currently stands at two-thirds of the public (67%).
- Belief that "the bible is totally ac-Mark Stroman, 41, was executed curate in all of the principles it teach-

### Marquee Madness



#### Finally, some truth

Wayne Trotta, Pennsylvania, wonders: "What's the fun of being an atheist, if the churches are going to do our work



#### **Except when she** doesn't

Barb and Roy Masinton's daily commute in eastern North Carolina was "graced" by this church notice.

### State/Church Bulletin

### 4th Circuit: County prayers are out of bounds

In *Joyner v. Forsyth County, North Carolina*, the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 on July 29 that the County Commission's prayer policy violates the Establishment Clause.

While the policy is purportedly neutral, all the invocations were delivered by Christians, and about 80% invoked Jesus' name. Thus, the policy "resulted in sectarian invocations meeting after meeting that advanced Christianity," the court said.

The decision noted a pastor's 2007 prayer the plaintiffs objected to: "Heavenly Father, tonight we are so grateful for the privilege to pray that is made possible by Your Son and his intercessory work on the Cross of Calvary. And Lord, we think about even a week from tomorrow, Lord, we'll remember that Virgin Birth, and how He was born to die. And we're so grateful tonight that we can look in the Bible and see how You instituted government." The prayer ended with, "For we do make this prayer in Your Son Jesus' name, Amen."

That prayer "clearly crossed the constitutional line," the majority ruled. "Taken together, the principles set forth by the Supreme Court in *Marsh* and *Allegheny* and by this circuit in *Wynne* and *Simpson* establish that the Board's policy, as implemented, cannot withstand scrutiny."

Six of the seven county commissioners are on the record as favoring an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Court: School boards can't pray either

The 3rd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals reversed a Delaware lower-court decision Aug. 5 and ruled the Indian River School District's practice of opening board meetings with prayers led by a board member is unconstitutional.

The three-judge panel overturned a ruling by U.S. District Judge Joseph Farnan Jr. that sectarian prayers invoking the name of Jesus are permissible, the Wilmington News Journal report-

The appeals court said the operable Establishment Clause precedent for prayers at school board meetings is *Lee v. Weisman*, not *Marsh v. Chambers*. The latter applies to invocations before legislative bodies.

Attorney Thomas Allingham, who represented the anonymous "Doe" plaintiffs, said the ruling was a clear victory for separation of state and church.

#### Suit seeks end to Utah bigamy law

Attorney Jonathan Turley filed a lawsuit July 13 that seeks to strike down Utah's bigamy law. Turley represents the polygamous family — Kody Brown and his four wives — from the TV reality show "Sister Wives."

"We can't embrace privacy as a principle and pick and choose who can enjoy it," Turley said at a press conference in Salt Lake City. "Now, this family doesn't look like a lot of families in

Utah, but it's not your family. It's their family."

The Browns haven't been prosecuted and have moved to Nevada, so it's questionable whether they have standing.

### Judge: Council can pray to Jesus

U.S. District Judge Dale Fischer ruled July 11 in favor of the Lancaster [Calif.] City Council's invocation policy that permits sectarian prayers.

Plaintiffs Shelley Rubin and Maureen Feller had challenged the prayer that opened an April 2010 council meeting in which reference was made to Jesus Christ. But U.S. District Judge Dale Fischer sided with the city, ruling the plaintiffs failed to prove there was a violation of the constitutional separation of state and church.

"Lancaster takes immense pride in winning this case and defending the fundamental right to pray, not only for our citizens, but indeed for all people across this nation," Mayor R. Rex Parris said in a statement. He reiterated he has "never faltered from wanting to grow a Christian community."

The city put the 2009 policy before the voters in April 2010, when it passed by a margin of 3 to 1.

### Texas board votes against creationism

The Texas Board of Education voted 14-0 on July 22 to approve scientifically accurate high school biology textbook supplements instead of creationist-backed supplements.

"This is a huge victory for Texas students and teachers," said Josh Rosenau, National Center for Science Education programs and policy director. At least four times as many people testified in favor of the mainstream supplements versus those opposing them.

### Minnesota mayor says prayer is divisive

The Litchfield [Minn.] City Council has stopped starting meetings with prayer. Mayor Keith Johnson informed clergy in the city of 6,700 people of the decision in June, the Litchfield Independent Review reported: "The decision stemmed from the city's growing diversity, the need to separate state and church and fallout from Pastor Bradlee Dean's politically charged and controversial prayer in the state House of Representatives in May."

For years, Litchfield Area Ministerial Association members have prayed before the council's first meeting of every month.

Noting a "letter-writing furor" on both sides about the mayor's decision, Independent Review columnist Brent Schacherer said, "Those sentiments also prove why a public prayer should not be used to open Litchfield City Council meetings."

### Courthouse decalog will be history

Dixie County, Fla., was given 30 days to remove a 6-ton granite Ten Commandments monument from the



county courthouse in Cross City, where it has sat since 2006. The ruling came July 15 from U.S. Senior District Judge Maurice Paul.

Along with the Commandments, "LOVE GOD AND KEEP HIS COM-MANDMENTS" is inscribed on the momument.

Paul awarded the ACLU of Florida nominal damages of \$1, the Gainesville Sun reported. "Local governments can't wink and nod their way around the highest law of the land just because they agree with the religious message they are supporting," ACLU of Florida Executive Director Howard Simon said.

"In fact, that's exactly what the Constitution prohibits — government sanctioned, promoted or enforced religion. It is sad that a federal judge had to order the county to honor the limited role of government required by our Constitution."

### USAF ponders when would Jesus nuke

The U.S. Air Force withdrew and is reviewing materials that used biblical passages and a quote from a former Nazi to teach missile officers about the ethics of launching nuclear weapons. The review came after the materials were revealed in a Truthout story.

Officers who train to be "missileers" were required to attend the ethics course, which discussed St. Augustine's "Qualifications for Just War," used other religious passages and images and included a statement from Wernher von Braun, who came to the U.S. from Nazi Germany to head the U.S. space program.

Von Braun was not cited as a scientific expert but as a moral authority, which Truthout called remarkable, considering von Braun's collaboration with Nazis in using forced prison labor to build weapons.

Mikey Weinstein, Military Religious Freedom Foundation president, said more than 30 missile officers contacted MRFF to complain about Christian imagery and biblical passages in the ethics training. He said the decision by the Air Force to pull the material is a "great victory for the Constitution."

#### Canadians don't like Islamic school prayer

Valley Park Middle School in the Toronto School District is allowing Islamic prayer services in the cafeteria on Fridays.

"It is a safety issue," School Board spokesperson Shari Schwartz told the Toronto Sun. "Students were leaving for the mosque during the day and some weren't returning."

Imams lead a 40-minute service with about 400 students in which the boys sit in front of girls in the lunch room. Girls who are menstruating are told to sit at the very back. Non-Muslims are banned from the room during prayers.

Hindu, Jewish and Christian groups picketed the board's office in protest July 25.

### Religious vaccination exemption denied

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York denied a Great Neck mother's request July 23 for a religious exemption from vaccination requirements for her child to attend public school.

Martina Caviezel, a professed pantheist who said she saw "God in everything," didn't want to immunize her 4-year-old daughter for fear of injecting diease into the girl's "perfect" and "divine" human form.

### Louisiana churches' free ride over?

The city of Mandeville, La., is looking into charging churches and parochial schools for water and sewer service, the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported July 26. Mayor Donald Villere and some City Council members weren't aware until recently that many religious facilities weren't paying for utility services and hadn't for perhaps as long as 50 years.

Councilwoman Trilby Lenfant said, "The question is: Who knew this practice was going on and how long? I don't see how this would be a legitimate use of public funds," she said.

The practice may well end, Villere said, depending on input from the city attorney and the state attorney general.

### Will 'Bible Buck' get on ballot?

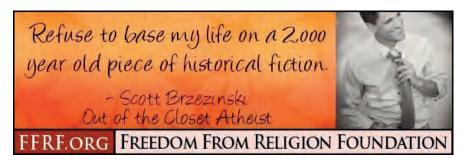
Charlie "Bible Buck" Hatchko is running as an American Independent Party candidate for the 11-member Luzerne County Council in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The election is Nov. 8.

Hatchko, 66, is a retired corrections officer who for years has been a presence at county government meeting. He's known as "Bible Buck" for his frequent quotation of scripture. the Hazleton Standard Speaker reported July 28.

A determination hasn't been made if he'll be able to be listed on the ballot

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### 2 FFRF'ers defect from Catholic cabal



New York member Scott Brzezinski, baptized in 1969 at St. Francis Catholic Church in Traverse City, Mich., sent copies of his FFRF Certificate of Debaptism to the two parishes he was associated with as a child and to Bishop Bernard Hebda of the Archdiocese of Gaylord, Mich. (whose response is above). Along with the debaptismal certificate, he enclosed a letter to "renounce any and all affiliation with your diocese and its churches.

"I require that you immediately remove me and my name from any and all records and rosters you may have of parishioners, members or any way that counts me as a part of your organization. I happily ceased practicing Catholicism in 1983."

Scott writes that Hebda responded in about a week. "In the second paragraph, he is correct in stating that baptism leaves an indelible mark. What he fails (or refuses) to realize is that the mark is, in fact, a scar."

He also notes the bishop's offer to meet. "Maybe I should take him up on his offer to discuss this further when I am back in Michigan in August." But he thinks it would be a waste of everyone's time. "If I did spend time to discuss this issue with him, I would be sure to wear one of my three FFRF T-shirts."

Debaptism information is here: ffrf.org/news/timely-topics/debaptismalcertificate/

Virtual billboard information is here: ffrf.org/out/



#### DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

611 WEST NORTH STREET GAYLORD, MI 49735-8349 (989) 732-5147

May 24, 2011



Dear Mr. Brzezinski:

Thank you for your letter of May 16, 2011, forwarding to me a copy of your "DeBaptismal Certificate."

Allow me to note, however, that Baptism leaves an indelible mark upon the soul that can never be erased. While I can assure you that you are not counted among the faithful of St. Francis Parish or the Diocese of Gaylord, there is nothing that I can do to de-baptize you.

In the event that you ever return to Michigan, I would be happy to discuss this matter with you, as would the pastor at St. Francis.

In the meantime, you can count on my prayers—I'm hoping that God's love will produce a softening of your heart in His regard.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Blund A. Kelble

Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda Bishop of Gaylord

#### Finally free from the (un)Holy See

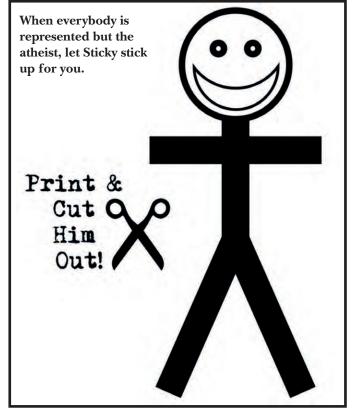
Colm O'Toole, Washington, writes: "Suitable for framing: FFTF's DeBaptismal Certificate" [April11] brought a smile to my face. It is with great joy and delight that I can state that I am one of a very small population who have actually defected from the Roman Catholic Church. In 1983, the church enabled parishioners to defect through an amendment to canon law enabling Actus formalis defectionis ab Ecclesia



Colm O'Toole

catholica. This change to canon law was skillfully utilized by an Irish group which set up the website CountMeOut.ie/. But the popularity of this process became its downfall. In 2010, the Holy See amended canon law to remove the ability to defect. Attached is a copy of the letter which I received from the Archdiocese of Seattle, confirming my state of being "not in full Communion" with the Catholic Church. Many thanks for your great publication.

### Sticky sticks up for atheists



Eric Paul Erickson, author of *Atheist Bliss*, recommends placing Sticky wherever religious zealots threaten our constitutionally mandated secular government institutions. Sticky is also online at *atheistbliss.com/sticky.html*. Erickson's photo book is available at *ffrf.org/shop/*.



#### ALEXANDER

ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE

BY THE GRACE OF GOD
AND
THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE

DECREE OF DEFECTION

from the

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

for

COLM PATRICK O'TOOLE

Having received the duly executed and witnessed Declaration of Defection from the Roman Catholic Church from Colm Patrick O'Toole, and;

Having determined, after careful review and consideration, that the reasons set forth by Colm Patrick O'Toole qualify as a true separation from the constitutive elements of the life of the Church;

I hereby declare that, as of this day, September 22, 2009, Colm Patrick O'Toole has satisfied the requirements for Formal Defection from the Catholic Church (Actus formalis defectionis ab Ecclesia catholica) and is not in full Communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
Of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Washington

This 22nd day

of Septemb

in the year of our Lord, 2009.



### Women Without Superstition No Gods — No Masters

WOMEN WITHOUT SUPERSTITION "No Gods—No Masters"

THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF WOMEN FREETHINKERS OF THE SETEINTH & TWENTIETH CENTURE Edited by Annie Laurie Gaylor Edited by Annie Laurie Gaylor
The Collected Writings of Women
Freethinkers of the Nineteenth
and Twentieth Centuries.

The first anthology of women freethinkers, with more than 50 activists and writers critical of religion. Includes biographical sketches, selected writings,

Members — \$24 Non-members — \$30 Shop online at: ffrf.org/shop

## Triangle, Todd top fundraisers



The Triangle Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter, participated June 3-4 in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life event in Raleigh N.C. "Our 28-member team of freethinkers took home the prize for being the top fundraiser, raising over \$23,000 for cancer research and prevention," said Amy Glenn. "We were also recognized for having the top individual fundraiser, Todd Stiefel (\$10,255), and for winning, perhaps ironically, the 'Most Team Spirit' award."

Teams had to keep a walker/runner on the track all night. TFS displayed "hope lanterns" in memory of Paul "Jody" Gaylor Jr. and in honor of Christopher Hitchens throughout the night, and their photos were featured during the luminaria slide show. Amy adds, "We had a phenomenal team this year. I have no doubt that we had the most fun of any team there! We're looking forward to doing it again next year."

#### Meet a Member

### Meet an irrepressible member

Name: Marle Brandt. Where I live: Sequim, Wash.

Where and when I was born: July 6, 1936, in northeastern Montana. I grew up on a ranch in the boonies about 15 miles north of the tiny town of Nashua. We had running water in the house if the person on the pail handle felt like running between the well and the house. We got electricity and indoor plumbing when I was a sophomore. Phone lines were strung when I was a freshman at university.

Family: I have three grown-up kids. I'm very proud of them and feel they turned out just fine considering they were raised by an atheist mother who didn't teach them their morals according to some nasty book of fiction. I enjoy them and their spouses whenever we can get together.

Education: My mother taught me in the first grade. That was the only alternative to moving to "town." By second grade, the neighborhood parents had convinced the school board to reopen the one-room country school. High school was a long bus trip into town.

I went to college for a few semesters of prelaw. When I worked as an IRS tax examiner, I took formal tax law training. I started working for the USDA Forest Service, and took procurement courses, including contracting for construction of roadsand facilities.

**Occupation**: I retired from the Forest Service as a contracting officer. Now I have found volunteering and playing can also be interesting. I joined the Master Gardeners and went back to education to learn a bit about botany,

entomology and related subjects about plants and the things that attack them.

I have my own "survival of the fittest" garden (so many plants, so little space!). I joined the Friends of the Library and sort and sell donated books. I joined the local Light[house] Station Association and have gone out different times for a week at a time as a volunteer keeper.

How I got where I am today: By a long, circuitous trail, going where life took me. That may sound like I didn't have any control. Not so. Even as a small child, I remember making choices and then working to make them a reality. Of course, when encountering a roadblock, if it's too solid, one has to go around it. I never got a law degree, for instance, but I still worked in fields using law in some form.

Where I'm headed: I don't know but hope I can continue to spend time with my kids, keep active, keep learning, travel to new places and revisit some old favorites.

**Person in history I admire**: All of the women like Alice Paul who worked so long and so hard for women's suffrage. She was a rabble-rouser who gave the movement a needed boost at that time in history.

A quotation I like: "Failure is impossible," (Susan B. Anthony), and "No gods, no masters," (Margaret Sanger). I've had the latter as a bumper sticker on every car I've owned since it became available. Finally, from a supervisor many years ago, "Never get into a pissing match with a skunk." That one has served me well!

A few of my favorite things: My kids, reading, playing bridge, Hawaii, walking or sitting by the Pacific Ocean,



Marle Brandt in her guise as radical recycler.

country music from the '50s, '60s and '70s.

These are not: Dishonesty, ostentation in any form, high heels (on anyone), electronic gizmos, (especially computers), fancy restaurants with snooty waiters, people that try to preach at me, irresponsible parents and pet owners.

Doubts about religion started: I don't remember having any doubts, because I don't remember having any religion. My mother was extremely religious until the end of her life at 103. I remember parroting "Now I lay me down to sleep," but that only lasted until I began to realize what I was saying and that I didn't like it.

One time my parents went to great lengths to drive me over a rough road to a Sunday school where a woman told a story about Noah's ark. I was a polite child, so as I was leaving, I thanked her for the nice fairy tale. She said that was a *true* story. As a ranch kid, I knew there wouldn't have been room to carry that much food for the animals in that little boat. Besides, the coyotes would eat the sheep. I was trying to enlighten her of those facts of life when she got upset and bad went to worse.

When my parents came to pick me up, Mother asked me if I had a good time. I reminded her that she had

taught me to never tell a lie and that woman told lies and I was never going back there. I didn't. My father may or may not have been a believer. He was a very private person, and I never heard him say one way or another, but he didn't approve of organized religion.

Why I'm a freethinker: There's no other way to be. I began to delve into the bible at an early age to see where it said that I couldn't do things because I was a girl. My two brothers were in their early teens when I arrived, so my parents had waited a long time for this sweet little girl, which I wasn't.

As I grew older, I intended to learn to drive a tractor, ride a horse, help at branding time, etc. My parents had other ideas. My father just laid down an edict, went about his business and left my poor mother be the enforcer. She would get exasperated and snap "because the bible says that girls can't!" I decided to find out for myself, and found that the bible seemed to put females pretty far down in the pecking order.

I don't think my father knew what to do with this weird girl child. He put roadblocks in my way, but if I was determined enough to get through them, he allowed it. I guess that made me a strong person.

Ways I promote freethought: I never made a secret of being an atheist. People need to realize that atheists are normal people, and knowing they are living next to or working next to or volunteering next to one can help that realization along.

My FFRF bumper stickers are a great conversation starter. People ask about them or comment one way or another and that's a great opportunity to give a brief rundown of freethinking and keeping the various religions out of politics. Page 28 Freethought Today Madison, Wisconsin August 2011

### FFRF sues, protests Gov. Perry's prayer rally

Continued from front page

dom and provision for our state and nation. There is hope for America. It lies in heaven, and we will find it on our knees."

FFRF further asked the judge to force Perry to remove links to the rally from his official gubernatorial website and to rescind his prayer proclamation calling Aug. 6 a "Day of Prayer and Fasting for our Nation's Challenges." FFRF further requested that Perry be enjoined from reading or presenting his proclamation at the event and to at-

tend only as a private citizen and not in his capacity as governor.

In an obvious concession, Perry did not present or read his proclamation at the rally, where he was introduced as a speaker, nor did the caption under his name identify him as "governor." Perry fervently prayed, reading both Old and New Testament verses to some 30,000 weeping, wailing, praying and flaying evangelical Christian attendees.

Perry worked "hand in glove" with the American Family Association to declare, host and promote the prayer rally, FFRF contended. FFRF noted AFA "promotes a rabid evangelical Christian agenda that is hostile to nonbelievers, non-Christians and other protected groups, such as gays and lesbians."

Perry had called on members of Congress to attend and sent invitations to all governors. Only one accepted — Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback. Florida Gov. Rick Scott sent his "copycat" blessings on video.

FFRF has 90 days to decide whether to appeal its dismissal on standing to the 5th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.



## Register now for FFRF's activist convention Oct. 7-9



Jessica Ahlquist

Recognizing home and museum on Friday afteractivism and intellect will be themes at FFRF's 34th annual convention on the weekend of Oct. 7-9, 2011, at the Marriott Hart-

only \$16 adult, \$14 student. The shuttle bus will leave from the hotel and return every half hour from 11 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

The formal program begins Friday

The formal program begins Friday at 7 p.m. (registration opens at 5 p.m.), continues all day Saturday and closes by noon following the Sunday morning membership and Board of Director meetings.

FFRF convention rates at the Marriott Hartford Downtown, 200 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, Conn., are \$159 plus tax, single, double, triple or quadru-

ple. Reserve your rooms directly by requesting "Freedom From Religion Foundation"

Group Block by calling toll-free 1-866-373-9806. You may reserve online at www.marriott.com. Rooms are held until Sept. 6 unless filled before, so book now to avoid disappointment.

Rebecca

Newberger

Goldstein

Speakers and honorees announced to date include:

- Jessica Ahlquist, 16, who is a plaintiff in an ACLU federal lawsuit to remove religious imagery from her Rhode Island high school. Jessica will receive a \$1,000 student activist award and talk about her case.
- Harrison Hopkins will also accept a student activist award and talk about



Harrison Hopkins



Jerry Coyne

what happened when he and FFRF protested an unlawful senior class vote on whether to pray at his graduation ceremony in Laurens, S.C.

- **Professor Jerry Coyne** of the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Chicago will receive FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award. Coyne, who is author of the recent book, *Why Evolution Is True*, wrote an outspoken column, "Science and religion aren't friends," appearing in USA Today.
- Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, author of 36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction, who will be named Freethought Heroine 2011 and will speak on "36 Arguments Against the Existence of God." Named "Best Novel of 2010" by the Christian Science Monitor, 36 Arguments ends with a chapter in which Rebecca's atheist protagonist offers 36 arguments against the existence of God. Goldstein is a 1996 MacArthur Fellow ("the Genius Award"). She is research associate at Harvard's Department of Psychology.
- Steve Trunk, a veteran, FFRF Board and Lifetime Member, will receive FFRF's Atheist in Foxhole Award as plaintiff in a victorious lawsuit declaring the Mount Soledad cross in San Diego unconstitutional. The challenge has been in the courts since the 1980s.
- Mitch Kahle, founder of Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church, will be named Freethinker of the Year for persuading the state Senate to drop prayers.
- FFRF Co-President Dan Barker will entertain at the piano. The event also includes the traditional complimentary dessert after the Friday opening and the drawing for "clean" (pre"In God We Trust") currency Saturday night.

Register with FFRF (only \$50 per member, \$55 per spouse or companion accompanying member, \$95 for nonmember), using the handy registration form on this page.

The optional Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast is \$25, and Saturday dinner is \$45 including service charge and tax. More details, speaker updates, menu and online registration can be found at FFRF's website:

ffrf.org/outreach/convention/

Return to: FFRF, Attn: Convention, P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701

## Freedom From Religion Foundation's 34th Annual Convention October 7–9, 2011

ford in downtown

It's time to book

your room and

In addition to

Conn.

Hartford,

register!

convention speakers, awardees and

events, this year's convention offers an

opportunity to tour the Mark Twain

House in downtown Hartford. FFRF

has arranged for a group tour rate

for early birds interested in seeing the

Make checks
payable to "FFRF"

Marriott Hartford Downtown Hartford, Conn.



No. registering			
FFRF Member registra	ion(s) @ \$50 per person		\$
Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$55			\$ <u> </u>
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	* Meal prices include 21 % g		
Mark Twain Tour (incl	udes shuttle) @ \$16	-	
	ent) (includes shuttle) @ 5		
Name(s)	Please include names of all registrants for nametags		
Address			
City/State/Zip	Please include phone/e-mail (in	case we have a question ab	out your registration)